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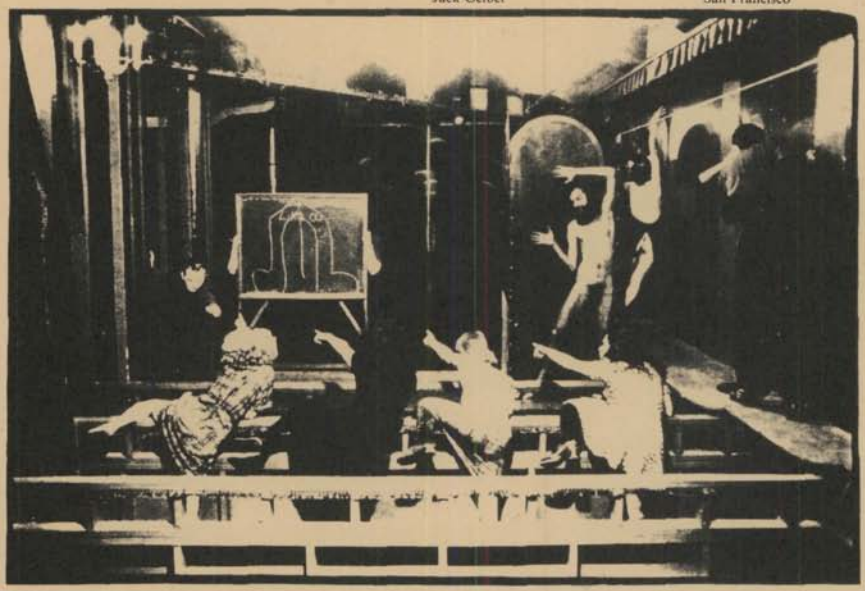

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We are saddened by the death of

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Hans Morgenthau and Ethel Person

THE ROOTS OF NARCISSISM

It has become fashionable to call the present age narcissistic, and indeed the ascendancy of the concern for self as an ultimate value is unmistakable. Take as an example the cultural preoccupation with both survivalism and self-actualization. Survivalism is most apparent in the self-congratulatory pronouncements made by or about people emerging from a variety of crises, "I (you) am (are) a survivor" as well as in the landscape crowded with joggers running for their lives, a population gulping vitamin pills and yet preoccupied with hypochondriacal concerns, death, and dying. Self-actualization appears in the cultural and self-imposed demands for constantly enlarging emotional experiences, creativity and forever-expanding horizons. However, since the celebration of the self has been a recurrent theme in western civilization since antiquity and has until recently been viewed as compatible and even organically connected with a stable world order, we must specify what special features of the current preoccupation with self warrant the designation of the present age as narcissistic.

The use of the term narcissism is somewhat confused. On the one hand, the narcissistic personality has been described as a pathological clinical entity. On the other hand, narcissism has been broadly used as a perjorative term to describe certain aspects of current culture. Although there is some overlap in these two usages of the term narcissism, they are by no means identical. Cultural narcissism describes widespread personality traits which may bear certain resemblances to formal characteristics found in the clinically diagnosed narcissistic personality, but which may arise adaptively in response to cultural dilemmas and not primarily out of disordered individual development. In general, these traits may be subsumed under the general headings of hedonism, survivalism and psychic self-awareness. These traits in themselves are not new in the history of man, but it is the context in which they are exercised which makes the descriptive term narcissism apt. And that context is the way in which the self is viewed in relationship to the culture in which the individual lives. It is only in the difference in the view of the self in society that we may

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begin to distinguish the narcissism of the latter half of the twentieth century from the individualism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The self was never heretofore "the ultimate value" nor was it meant to be. Self was subordinate to group (family, tribe, or society) or god, to something larger than itself. This older concept of self is reflected in literature. Until quite recently, with the exception of the picaresque, the hero is the celebrated individual who insures not his own but society's survival. It is the reversal from celebration of the self in a defined cultural context to celebration of the self in opposition to the cultural context which describes the revolution in the individual's self-image. This revolution is not primarily psychological (in source) but reflects modern homelessness, that is, individuals have no "place," no group or god or tribe with which to identify and through which to realize themselves. Without a socially-determined role to satisfy, one must increasingly turn to personal satisfaction in its narrow sense. Despite the fact that it is easier to satisfy an externally-defined role rather than an insatiable, uncertain self which must determine itself, this shift in the conception of self has been paradoxically idealized as the end result of a series of struggles against a repressive social order. We will sketch here the breakdown of certain groupings and philosophical premises which provided the raison d'être for preceeding generations, will turn our attention to the changing conception of self which accompanied the shift in social organization and will finally scrutinize some aspects of cultural narcissism which are so frequently misperceived as disease rather than as symptoms.

The rise of narcissism cannot be understood without taking into consideration the human dilemma to which narcissism pretends to offer a solution. That condition is alienation. Modern man is beset by two manifestations of alienation, one existential, which all human beings at all times experience, and the other historic, to which contemporary narcissism is a response. Man's existential dilemma, one which transcends time and place, is the need to find meaning in a life which is finite, while human aspiration and human imagination are not. The acuteness of the dilemma, however, does vary with time and place.

It is minimal in a setting in which the individual feels he fills a predetermined place in a universe that makes sense. This is particularly true in certain tribal organizations in which the emphasis on the self is minimal.

It is maximal in the contemporary preoccupation with one's individuality, what we might call the sense of self, which is almost

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taken as an immutable feature of psychological life. But, as Jacob Burkhardt argued, the rediscovery of self was a phenomenon of the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages, man was "conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family or corporation—only through some general category." In particular, religion provided man with a meaningful universe in which he had a meaningful place. Taking into account his existential alienation, too glaring to be argued away, religion promised man salvation in the future, either in another world where he would be rewarded and punished justly and where he would overcome his present fallibilities in a new incarnation, or in this world made whole by the coming of the Messiah. The gradual dissolution of the classical theological and philosophical systems and the concomitant outburst of individual creativity in art, literature, politics, and science in the Renaissance appeared to provide empirical proof of man's ability to overcome alienation through his own autonomous efforts. Since the Renaissance, the cult of individuality has been at one and the same time both the glory of western civilization and one of its disintegrative elements.

It is because of the cult of individuality that the problem of alienation is particularly complex in western civilization. Here, man is set apart from both the beasts and the gods by the contrast between what he is and what he wants to be. His aspiration transcends the limits of his ability. A pig is a pig is a pig and, we can assume, wants to be nothing else. A god by definition attained the perfection of goodness, wisdom, and power; there is nothing to be aspired to beyond that perfection. It is reserved for man to seek more than his nature allows him to have.

It is the awareness of this existential gap between aspiration and attainable realization that is at the root of the existential alienation that all men, but post-Renaissance western man in particular, experiences. He is a child of nature, but the gift of consciousness prevents him from being nothing but that. He has been created in the image of God, but not with the divine attributes of perfection. The gap between man, on the one hand, nature and divinity, on the other, cannot be bridged. It cannot be eliminated without depriving man of his human nature. Thus man is condemned by his own nature to hang forever suspended between heaven and earth, forever striving in vain to join one to the other. He is driven by his own aspiration toward unattainable goals. But it is his very nature that renders these goals unattainable, hence Faustian man's alienation from himself.

Contemporary alienation is no longer capable of falling back upon theological or metaphysical structures mitigating or denying the

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very fact of alienation. These structures have been deprived of their plausibility by the scientific spirit. It is in particular the idea of scientific progress which in modern times has at best given assurance and at least held out the hope that the schism in man's soul can or will be overcome by man's own unaided efforts. Hegel, Marx, and Freud represent in different ways the belief in the value of emancipation of the individual from the shackles of "superstition" as manifested in the dogmas of religion and metaphysics. For Hegel and Marx the emancipation of the individual was embodied in, and therefore qualified by, the progress of objective reason, which would issue either in the identity of the real with the rational or the substitution of the administration of things for the domination of man by man. The Hegelian and Marxist systems still presuppose an objective rational order. It is by virtue of this order that the individual's emancipation is postulated. In other words, individualism is a function of the objective rational order of the universe. Both these systems are fundamentally optimistic insofar as they postulate progress through the dialectic of history. In contrast, John Stuart Mill presumed as an alternative for the imposed order an inherent order in which unbridled individualism leads to a harmony of interests. Unhappily, history has belied the promise for progress implicit in all these systems.

Science, which was once thought to provide the answer to the human quandary has proved its inner contradiction, for science bears a Janus head. On the one hand, it has enormously broadened and disseminated man's understanding of himself and of his environment, while on the other it has unleashed destructive forces which man has thus far proven unable to harness for human needs. The prime example is of course nuclear power. This ambivalence of science has destroyed the plausibility of the belief that science is essentially good in human terms and that the more science there is the better it is for man.

Our age has reacted to this disillusionment in two different ways. One group has sought refuge in different pseudosciences, such as astrology, futurology, some types of behaviorist and quantitative social sciences. They have sought the gratification of science in intellectual constructs that convey the illusion of precision, predictability, and human control, while in truth they have more in common with the alchemists of bygone times than with the empirical scientists whose objectivity they claim. Others have come to realize that science does not carry within itself the moral standards necessary for its evaluation in human terms. We have also come to realize that there are no longer any extraneous objective values by which the human dimension of science can be judged.

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The main criticism of science has been leveled by humanists who posit culture as the alternative to science. But what we call culture is no longer a monolithic system of values by which the members of western civilization can orient themselves. It has become a kind of department store where the individual has the opportunity of choosing among a great number of cultural systems and fragments or combinations thereof. The reference to culture has strengthened the tendencies to narcissism in that it has identified cultural values with purely aesthetic values without transcendant meanings and commitments.

The need for some external order to overcome alienation has found its most pervasive intellectual and political expression in modern nationalism. The emotional intensity of the identification of the individual with his nation stands in inverse proportion to the stability of the particular society as reflected in the sense of security of its members. The greater the stability of society and the sense of security of its members, the smaller are the chances for collective emotions to seek an outlet in aggressive nationalism, and vice versa. The revolutionary wars of France in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the wars of liberation against Napoleon from 1812–15 are the first examples in modern times of mass insecurity, induced by the instability of domestic societies and leading to emotional outbursts in the form of fervent mass identification with aggressive foreign policies and wars.

Social instability became acute in western civilization during the nineteenth century. It became permanent in the twentieth century as a result of the emancipation of the individual from the ties of tradition, especially in the form of religion, of the increased rationalization of life and work, and of cyclical economic crises. The insecurity of the groups affected by these factors found an emotional outlet in fixed, emotionally-accentuated nationalistic identifications. As western society became ever more unstable, the sense of insecurity deepened and the emotional attachment to the nation as the symbolic substitute for larger meaning became ever stronger. With the world wars, revolutions, concentration of economic, political, and military power, and economic crises of the twentieth century, nationalism was carried forward with the fervor of a secular religion. Contests for power now took on the ideological aspects of struggles between good and evil. Foreign policies transformed themselves into sacred missions. Wars were fought as crusades, for the purpose of bringing the true political religion to the rest of the world. This relation between social disintegration, personal insecurity and the ferocity of modern nationalistic power drives can be studied to particular advantage in German fascism,

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where these three elements were more highly developed than anywhere else.

Thus nationalism, first conceived as a liberalizing force against a dying feudalism (national self-determination), changed its character radically in the twentieth century. Nations no longer oppose each other, as they did from the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 to the Napleonic Wars, and then again from the end of the latter to the First World War, within a framework of shared beliefs and common values, which imposes effective limitations upon the ends and means of their struggle for power. They oppose each other now as the standard-bearers of moral systems, each of them of national origin and each of them claiming and aspiring to provide a supranational framework of moral standards which all the other nations ought to accept and within which their foreign policies ought to operate. The moral code of one nation flings the challenge of its universal claim with Messianic fervor into the face of another, which reciprocates in kind. Compromise, the virtue of the old diplomacy, becomes the treason of the new, for the mutual accommodation of conflicting claims, possible or legitimate within a common framework of moral standards, amounts to surrender when the moral standards themselves are the stakes of the conflict. Thus the stage is set for a contest among nations whose stakes are no longer their relative positions within political and moral systems accepted by all, but the ability to impose upon the other contestants a new universal political and moral system recreated in the image of the victorious nation's political and moral convictions.

However, World War II, the Holocaust, the fear of nuclear destruction and the perceived moral bankruptcy of nations have led a significant portion of the populace of western nations to abandon nationalism as an effective means of counteracting the absence of any viable metaphysical system. Without nationalism as a counterweight to alienation, this part of the populace has been thrown back into a crisis of meaninglessness. It is in this context that the preoccupation with and titillation of the self has become pronounced. During this century, and more particularly since World War II, as social norms have lost much of their credibility, the cult of individuality has increasingly taken on a new dimension. Individuality is progressively seen as the legitimacy of the expression of the individual's needs against the demands of society, as opposed to the view of individuality that expresses itself through preeminence within an established order. For example, modernism in the art world has explicitly been viewed as an attack on the values of the academy and other traditional values. Freud described civilization as exacting repression of certain individual needs, particularly sexual. Individualism in Freud's thinking finds its

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objective point of reference in the values of a particular society, which are hypothesized, at least for purposes of understanding and therapy, as absolute. Because Freud maintained a pessimism in which he viewed the demands of culture as intrinsically inimical to the free expression of individualism, the necessity for limits to individualism is explicit in his work. It is precisely this conception of the social order which is being challenged by the twentieth-century cult of individuality.

Among the early analysts, Willhelm Reich in particular focused on one particular aspect of Freud's theory: he emphasized the ravages of sexual repression on the individual and envisioned a utopia of sexual liberation. In contrast to Freud's pessimism, Reich did not emphasize the contradictions and limitations inherent in man's nature, but formulated man's ills simply as the outcome of a repressive culture. As cultural mores have shifted and, to some degree, the restrictions on sexual gratification have receded, the error of Reich's formulation emerges. Many analysts agree that the incidence of psychological problems has not diminished but that their nature has shifted. In particular there are fewer structural neuroses and symptoms and more complaints about difficulties in loving, working and relating. This shift corresponds to a shift in theoretical emphasis among analysts to theories of separation-individuation (Mahler), theories of the development of self and object representations (Jacobson), and theories of narcissism (Kohut and Kernberg).

As Modell has stated, "The ever-changing nosology of the neuroses is the most direct indication of the impact of historical processes upon the ego." However analysts may overemphasize historical impact as being mediated predominantly if not exclusively through child-rearing practices. And in fact, it is the formation and maintenance of both ego ideal, or ideal self and superego in personality structure, which reflect the historical process and changing cultural values. Even so, a "good enough" environment is as essential to the maintenance of mature personality differentiation as a "good enough" mother (or surrogate) is essential to infantile differentiation in the separation-individuation phase. In other words, the culture must provide an ongoing environment which provides stability, the possibility of ongoing relationships and consensually validated values. In the absense of such an environmental climate, many individuals whose early childhoods fall within the range of acceptable family structures and individual personality development, will nonetheless fall prey to excessive manifestations of narcissism. The current cultural crises as manifested through the many faces of narcissism reflects the loss of a consensually validated value scheme.

The progressive shift in the individual's conception of his ideal

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self which we have repeatedly alluded to is seen dramatically in the shift of values from the Victorian era to our own. In the Victorian era, the predominant value scheme held that one sought to achieve preeminence within an established moral order. For many centuries, artists were given various degrees of license to live outside the boundaries of conventional society but precisely because of their unique contributions to culture. This ethic served a dual purpose for conventional society; the life of the bohemian artist both allowed vicarious experience and was simultaneously an object for censure. In the late nineteenth century, license became detached from achievement. A different conception of the individual good was emerging—for example, as portrayed in the exhortations of Pater and Wilde—a conception which elevated experience above both duty and productivity, and in which the abdication of a bourgeois identity became a virtue in itself. These aspects of the exaltation of the self, so frequently associated with dandyism, focused on the person, not his accomplishments. In terms of the monomaniacal celebration of the self, dandyism as an end unto itself marks the beginning of the narcissistic trend which so dominates the contemporary cultural climate. Estheticism and hedonism were to be superimposed on, and dominate, the natural order. Thus, that license which had been the province of the artist was democratized and separated from any endeavor. At the same time, in bourgeois culture, enormous importance was placed on the mastery of men over nature which, at least prior to the problem of environmental and genocidal destruction, promised a superior man-made order.

The most widely heralded shift between the Victorian era and our own is the sexual revolution. But the sexual revolution must be viewed as a paradigm for a much broader shift, a shift both in the concept of the ideal self and the concept of the good society. While such an expansion of the self as accrues from this shift may be experienced as liberating and self-enhancing, it also carries a hidden negative valence. As traditional relations have broken down, not only has greater freedom accrued to the individual but the burden on the self has expanded. With increasing social mobility the belief has gained more and more adherents that we are masters of our own fates and consequently the individual is viewed as personally responsible for any failures in his life.

Despite the subjective experience of the sovereignty of the self, the individual is dependent in an unprecedented way on both the services and decisions of others. Few of us are even able to supply our own food, light, or shelter and virtually none of us can claim to control our political destinies. This decline of self-sufficiency coexists with an

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exalted notion of self and leads to an inherent contradiction. It is this inherent contradiction which has been instrumental in the retreat from preoccupation with political freedom which we cannot effectively control to a preoccupation with personal freedom over which there is at least the illusion of control.

Thus, while the retreat from an insistence on political freedom to an insistence on personal freedom is adaptive in resolving a feeling of individual impotence, paradoxically, it is also instrumental in increasing the burden on the self. In other words, the temporary cure for the disease aggravates the disease. The belief that man is master of his fate, a somewhat dubious proposition to start with, has now been elevated into an even more subversive proposition, namely the belief that human nature is infinitely malleable and that the self can be endlessly recreated, and in fact ought to be—a proposition which defines self-actualization as the supreme good.

The attempt at transformation of the self ranges from physical interventions (plastic surgery, hair color, exercise regimes) to psychological interventions (all modalities of therapy and the experimental movement, particularly the search for transforming experience) as well as the high valuation on changes in life situations—institutionalized in the high incidence of divorce and midlife career changes. Werner Erhardt, the man who changed his name and founded EST, is a prototype of self-invention. The symbol, par excellence, for self-invention is the transsexual. Despite the driven nature of the transsexual, the transsexual image depicts ultimate freedom; not even the confines of one's genetic sex and physical being need dictate the limits of one's life; neither geography nor anatomy is any longer linked to destiny.

Although the exaltation of the sense of self lends itself to certain psychological gratifications, it imposes the enormous burden of internalization of responsibility for life's failures and deficiencies. This is a burden to which the individual's real capacities, self-esteem and need systems are seldom equal, particularly in view of the attenuation of traditional support systems, such as family and community. Even though we are describing an historical sequence which is pervasive in western civilization, Americans are particularly vulnerable since great expectations for personal performance are intensified in what has until quite recently been a relatively mobile society. Additionally, the influence of psychological thinking in this country lends a ready rationalization for failure; the individual sees himself as an underachiever, not as ultimately lacking in endowment. Limitations are not acceptable. Consequently, despite the apparent feast of gratifications

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available, many people suffer chronic low grade depressions and feelings of inadequacy.

It is in this context that another cultural strain has emerged, one that emphasizes not the ascendancy of the self, but its obliteration, for example, the cult of eastern religions and the self-designated "Jesus freaks." Self-obliteration becomes attractive when the demands on the self are so extensive that the discrepancy between expectation and performance can only lead to personal failure and humiliation. Thus self-obliteration attempts to deal with the burden of excessive demands and is predominantly used to restore self-esteem. The individual's alienation from traditional support systems and affiliations leaves him rudderless and fearful; he is looking for an "overself" to substitute for his diminished selfhood. The cultural preoccupation with drugs looks in both directions, both at self-actualization and self-obliteration. These two trends, one toward the actualization of the self and the other toward its eclipse, are alternative adaptations to the same contemporary dilemma.

While previous alienation was alienation with at least the illusion of a remedy which performed the function of a real remedy insofar as it was firmly believed in and consistently acted upon, contemporary alienated man faces his quandary alone, without even the promise of a remedy outside himself. What is left for him is the consciousness of his individuality. Thus, contemporary alienation leads of necessity to contemporary narcissism. By his own isolated efforts he endeavors to achieve the salvation foreclosed to him by the decay of the traditional theological and philosophical structures. The individual, deprived of objective rational norms which kept individuals together in an ongoing society, becomes the measure of all things and surrenders to his raw aspirations, and rejoices in his "liberation" from an objective rational order which had previously served as the ultimate standard for judgment and action. Paradoxically, part of the intellectual rationalization for this shift has come from a subtle perversion of psychoanalytic thinking with intellectual antecedents in Reich's misunderstanding of Freud. Many therapists, particularly practitioners of some of the newer therapies, have abandoned the aim of uncovering unconscious conflict in favor of facilitating assertion, self-fulfillment and almost every modality of sexual gratification. Adherence to duty, if duty conflicts with self-fulfillment, may be interpreted as masochism. Guilt, which restrains behavior in the individual, and thereby maintains social order, is nonetheless held by some therapists to be a worthless emotion.

Thus in the end, contemporary man is left alone with himself. His own individuality, experienced as his own body as distinct from other

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bodies, becomes the ultimate reality of attention, nurturance, and care, hence the proliferation of institutes for body culture and cultist attempts at gaining heightened consciousness through cultivation of the body.

It is only consistent for man thus confined to his individual body to seek expansion of that narrow intellectual base and its legitimization, not only in the present and for the future, but also in the past. Consciousness, heretofore illuminating the nature of man and of his world through understanding his past, is reduced to the search for "roots," that is, his individual ancestry. To know that his ancestors lived, achieved, suffered, becomes a reassuring connection for an individual who finds himself alone in a world of similarly disconnected individuals. If he cannot relate to them in a meaningful way, he can at least relate genealogically to those who came before him in the ancestral line and are biologically responsible for his being here.

Man is no longer able to create order out of his chaotic aspirations, nor is he any longer capable of creating religious or metaphysical substitutes for the order to which he aspires. He faces three alternatives: chaos, an order imposed from without his alienated self, or an order organically grown from new experiences, insights and needs. As long as man experiences at least a measure of desire for meaningful order he will try to escape chaos and find order and meaning in what is called significantly a "new order." In the short run, this is the order which the modern age has experienced in totalitarianism—communist or fascist.

In the long run, however, there exists always the possibility of a burst of creative order as it occurred in Elizabethan England or the Golden Age of Spain or the classic age of European literature and philosophy at the turn of the eighteenth century. It would be overly sanguine to see the signs of such a new organic western civilization. For what we have seen in western civilization at present is an attempt, likely to be ephemeral, to preserve a modicum of order, trying to save the enfeebled values of an order that has lost its plausibility. Many of the intellectuals who thought they had found a new meaningful order in Marxism have turned back as neoconservatives toward the decaying order whose decay raised the issue of narcissism in the first place.

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HANNAH ARENDT: OPPOSING VIEWS

Martin Jay

The news of Hannah Arendt's sudden and unexpected death on December 4, 1975 was greeted with an outpouring of deeply felt shock and grief that made abundantly clear her extraordinary stature in our intellectual life. Personal tributes appeared by many of our most distinguished cultural figures, among them Mary McCarthy, Robert Lowell, Hans Morgenthau, William Phillips, Leonard Krieger, Maurice Cranston, and Hans Jonas. Symposia were organized to honor her memory at The New School and Bard College. The aura of acrimony that had dogged her reputation since the ugly furor over her Eichmann book in 1963 was dispelled, at least temporarily, in a general wave of good feeling that has yet to end. Clearly Hannah Arendt had made a mark on the cultural life of her adopted country the rival of any made by other intellectual migrants from fascist tyranny.

But precisely what that mark was her mourners could not easily say. Again and again, they puzzled over what Morgenthau called "the impossibility of categorizing Hannah Arendt according to prevailing classifications," often concluding with Cranston that she was "altogether *hors categorie*, a unique intellectual mixture of the reactionary and the revoluntionary." That she was a true "original," to borrow yet another formulation from one of her eulogizers, has in fact been long recognized and indeed accounted a virtue by her admirers, who see it as evidence of creativity and a refusal to wear ideological blinders. Although there has always been a minority position arguing that she was more confused and eclectic than truly original, the more common feeling, if one can generalize about these things, was that her noncategorizability was a source of strength rather than weakness. The joy of reading Hannah Arendt's not always pellucid prose lay, in fact, in the expectation of finding fresh insights into old problems, an expectation rarely disappointed.

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Just how idiosyncratic Hannah Arendt was can be gleaned from a brief glance at her intellectual career in this country. She first came to prominence in 1951 with the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, by some accounts her masterpiece despite its rough handling by more conventional historians in subsequent years. With hindsight, the book now can be seen as more than merely an historical-philosophical analysis of one of the key problems of our century; it was also a monument of the Cold War because of its relentless equation of Communism and Nazism as the two subtypes of the totalitarian genus. Because of her insistence that Communism could only follow out its historical logic and grow increasingly oppressive and imperialist, the book was eagerly received by defenders, conservative and liberal alike, of the American democratic system. Her credentials as an upholder of traditional American virtues were given additional support by her later insistence in *On Revolution* that our version of that phenomenon was superior to the French in a number of important respects, including its relative indifference to social issues. Clearly, as Jonas would recall at her funeral, her gratitude as an emigre experiencing American political practice first hand had "decisively shaped her political thinking," so that the American Republic, at least in its ideal state, would always hold a special place in her afffections. Not surprisingly, in the one book-length study of her thought preceding her death, Margaret Canovan concluded that she was best understood as a "Republican . . . in the old eighteenth-century sense of a partisan of public freedom."

But as readers of *On Revolution,* as well as her earlier theoretical studies, *The Human Condition* and *Between Past and Future,* could easily see, her vision of what constituted the ideal republic was deeply at odds with current American practice. For Hannah Arendt, at least in the majority of her writings, only direct and not representative democracy was the institutional setting for the exercise of true freedom. It was this emphasis on what became fashionable in the 1960s as "participatory democracy" that more than anything else accounts for her discovery by a new constituency in those years, the nascent New Left. In fact, at Berkeley, as political theorist Norman Jacobson remembers it, the Free Speech Movement was deeply influenced by her work during its formative period before the left reread its Marx. At approximately the same time, her heterodox treatment of the Eichmann case and her allegation of unwitting Jewish complicity in the Holocaust cost her much support in the more traditionally liberal American Jewish community. On both Vietnam and Watergate, she took positions that identified her more and more closely with the left, especially as her most frequent forum was *The New York Review of Books.* And yet at the same time she spoke out against the romanticization of the Third

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World then so popular in New Left circles and continued to hold to many nonleftist beliefs, a striking example being her insistence that private property was a necessary bulwark in the defense of liberty. Thus by the time of her death, she had managed alternately to inspire and infuriate almost all sectors of the political spectrum, remaining still an enigma whose elusive and unpredictable mind continued to confound attempts to pigeonhole it.

But even enigmas can be unraveled and it is perhaps not too much to expect that with the passage of time it will be easier to make out the contours of her intellectual career and give her work a coherence it may have lacked for her contemporaries, especially those who saw her solely in the American context. She now, after all, belongs to history and with the perspective that history should offer, it may be easier to see her whole. To do so will, of course, entail a more thorough understanding of her intellectual biography than is now possible with the materials available. One obvious starting point would be her deep and ambiguous involvement with Jewish issues, which sparked her first work on Rahel Varnhagen and clearly colored much of the rest. As Benjamin Schwartz demonstrated some years ago, her controversial attitudes towards the Jewish question were very much of a piece with her historical and theoretical work. It will, however, still take more time for the dust to settle from the *Eichmann in Jerusalem* controversy to approach this problem with the proper distance, so I will not attempt to go beyond Schwartz's account now.

What I would prefer to do instead is focus on another context in which Hannah Arendt's work must be placed, that of the *Existenzphilosophie* which many commentators have seen as her starting point. What I will argue is that to a remarkable degree this point of origin defined her attitudes well after she had apparently moved beyond it. She often, of course, gratefully acknowledged her indebtedness to Heidegger and Jaspers. In a *Partisan Review* essay written in 1946, in which she posed and answered the question "What is Existenz Philosophy?," Hannah Arendt made clear her conviction that the tradition beginning with Schelling and Kierkegaard and culminating in her teachers of the 1920s was *the* philosophy of the modern age. The French existentialists, Sartre in particular, were excluded from this judgment, although in later years she would find much to admire in Merleau-Ponty. Even though she made no reference to the political implications of *Existenzphilosophie*, with hindsight one can see that many of the themes made explicit in her subsequent work on politics were developed in strictly philosophical terms in the essay. Her distaste for the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, indeed for rationalism in general,

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her stress on the importance of new beginnings out of nothing, her belief in the role of deeds as opposed to pure contemplation, her agreement with Jaspers's stress on intersubjective communication as the source of a new humanism, her insistence that philosophy must transcend historicism, all of these were to figure prominently in her political theorizing. So too was her persistent reliance on the etymological significance of a word to explain its "real" meaning, which was a favorite ploy of Heidegger in particular. The explicit politicization of *Existenzphilosophie* was to come somewhat later in 1958 with *The Human Condition*, the most ambitious of her theoretical works, but all the ingredients were there in her postwar essay.

Perhaps what made her reluctant to spell it out was the memory of previous attempts to derive political conclusions from existentialism in the Weimar era. In addition to her teacher Heidegger, whose political adventures were confined to a brief, sorry period after the Nazi era began, the "political existentialists" of the twenties included Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger and Alfred Bäumler. Because all of them, to one degree or another, have been seen by most historians as having prepared the way for fascism, it is not surprising that Hannah Arendt, so outspoken in her criticism of totalitarianism, would shun their company. There can in fact be little question that she found much of their thought intolerable. Thus, she wrote against the celebration of violence in Jünger, and criticized Schmitt's emphasis on sovereignty and his glorification of movements rather than parties. She was equally opposed to their view of politics as the continuation of war by other means, having instead a far more benign reading of the public realm as an arena of pluralist cooperation. She also admitted that the *völkisch* excesses of Heidegger's collaborationist period were "mythologizing confusions," although she refrained from linking his philosophy as a whole with his sympathy for fascism as did another of his former students, Herbert Marcuse.

And yet despite these criticisms, Hannah Arendt's political philosophy can justly be situated in the political existentialist tradition of the 1920s, albeit as one of its "tender" rather than "tough" variants. To stress this link is useful not because it establishes some sort of guilt by association, but rather because it provides the historical context in which her apparently uncategorizable position begins to make sense. On the most general level, it allows us to see the broad movement of which she was a part, a movement which asserted the primacy of the political realm over society, culture, economics, or religion as the arena in which man's most quintessentially human quality, his capacity for freedom, could be realized. In opposition to the typical nineteenth-

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century tendency to downgrade politics to a function of socio-economic trends, which appeared in such widely different theories as classical economics, Saint-Simonian socialism, corporatist conservatism, Durkheimian sociology and Marxism (although as I shall argue shortly, with questionable support from the founder himself), a reaction set in during the early years of this century. Its leaders included Pareto and Mosca in Italy, the Action Française clique in France, and the political existentialists in Germany. On a practical level, a similar reassertion of the relative autonomy of politics can be seen in Lenin and the Italian Fascists.

Although Hannah Arendt's definition of the political cannot be simply equated with that of her predecessors, she nonetheless shared with them a strong desire to rescue politics from the debased state into which much nineteenth-century thought had cast it. Although she claimed that she had no preference between the life of the mind, the *vita contemplativa*, and the life of practice, the *vita activa*, Hannah Arendt significantly devoted virtually all of her intellectual gifts to an exploration of the latter realm. In *The Human Condition*, the *locus classicus* of her position, she divided the *vita activa* into three subcategories: labor, work and action. In the first, man is understood as an *animal laborans* whose existence is consumed by a never-ending cycle of reproducing the conditions of his survival. Labor is endless, repetitive, tied to biological necessity, and without permanent residue. Higher on the scale of human activities is work in which man is understood as *homo faber*. Here man leaves the purely biological level by violently transforming his environment through the creation of man-made products. The model is man as isolated craftsman leaving behind him more or less permanent artifacts which constitute what Hannah Arendt calls the "world." The third category, action, is the highest of the three for here men engaged in the activity which is most ennobling: the public interaction through speech which is the essence of freedom. The life of action, best exemplified by the Greek *polis*, where free men interacted on the basis of absolute equality, is an end in itself. The remembrance of noble political deeds, which the political community preserves, is a higher goal than even the preservation of life. The individual man is not the measure of all things, as humanists since Protagoras have wrongly assumed: the "world," which is the product of *homo faber*, and the earthly immortality produced by the remembrance of the *polis* should be seen as higher values instead.

In attempting to liberate political action from its subordination to other modes of the *vita activa*, Hannah Arendt, like the political existentialists of the twenties, was anxious to assure its utmost possible

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autonomy. Thus, she saw politics not merely as irreducible to socio-economic forces, but also as unhampered by all normative or instrumental constraints as well, a position often known as "decisionism." As its own end, politics should not be conceived as a means to anything else whether it be domination, wealth, public welfare, or social justice: in short, *politique pour la politique.* Or as Bäumler once put it, "Action does not mean 'deciding in favor of' . . . for that presupposes that one knows in favor of what one is deciding; rather action means 'setting off in a direction. . . .' It is really secondary to decide in favor of something that I have come to know." For Bäumler's "setting off in a direction," Hannah Arendt substitutes "the sheer capacity to begin," but the meaning is essentially the same. The existentialist roots of her position are clear in her discussion of Heidegger's stress on nothingness in her 1946 essay, "What is Existenz Philosophy?"

> The peculiar fascination, which the thought of the Nothing has exercised on modern philosophy, is not simply characteristic of Nihilism. If we look at the problem of Nothing in our context of a philosophy revolting against philosophy as pure contemplation, then we see it as an effort to become "Master of Being" and thereby to question philosophically in such a manner that we progress immediately to the deed; thus the thought that Being is really the Nothing has a tremendous advantage. Basing himself on this, Man can imagine himself, can relate himself to Being that is given, no less than the Creator before the creation of the world, which, as we know, was created out of nothing.

Although she was far less certain about the will as the motor of political action than the decisionists were, Miss Arendt shared their yearning to free politics from all extraneous considerations: "Action, to be free, must be free from motive on one side, from its intended goal as a predictable effect on the other." In so arguing she seemed to conclude that action should be free of even purely political goals (e.g., persuading one's opponents) as well as nonpolitical ones, which is characteristic of the binds into which she sometimes fell. Politics is also different, she argued, from violence, which is always instrumental in nature. It is moreover unlike authority, which relies on the coercion, albeit legitimized, of religion tradition, or other nonpolitical factors. In fact, authority was a Roman invention, the Greek *polis* having operated on the principle of persuasion rather than coercion. If politics has any analogy outside itself, it is to the performing arts where virtuosity is its own ephemeral end. "The theater is the political art par excellence; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art. By

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the same token, it is the only art whose sole object is man in his relationship to others."

Among the most significant constraints on politics which Hannah Arendt and the political existentialists alike found objectionable is rationalism. In her reading of the Greek experience, it is Socrates who introduced an illegitimately rationalist element where none had previously existed. The "public space" of the *polis* was one in which a plurality of views and opinions were tolerated and discussed without any attempt to distinguish among them according to transcendent criteria of truth or falsehood, rationality or irrationality. The search for truth was always done in isolation; politics was the realm of intersubjective opinion. In celebrating the political experience of the pre-Socratic Greeks, Hannah Arendt paralleled Heidegger's resurrection of the pre-Socratic philosophers with his concomitant denigration of *Logos*. In so doing, she arrived at type of "positive" freedom very different from that dangerous identification of freedom with rational necessity so abhorred by liberal opponents of the term such as Sir Isaiah Berlin. Like Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, Lukács, and other "positive" freedom proponents, she disliked the privatized, internal "negative" alternative stemming from Christianity and defended by liberalism, but she refused to accept their positing of a congruence between general and particular wills or interests. Freedom, she maintained, is the opposite of necessity, not its handmaiden. Pluralism, not unity, is the precondition for its maintenance. Montesquieu and Tocqueville were among the few modern theorists whose recognition of this reality ties them to the pre-Socratic Greeks.

Not surprisingly, one of her major philosophical heroes was Lessing, whose defiant embrace of relativism she praised. For the same reason, Jaspers's psychology of *Weltanschauungen* with its justification for universal relativism earned him high marks. Acting in the name of reason, she contended, is applying the criterion of *homo faber* to the realm of action because it entails the positing of an essential model to follow. Like the existentialists, she was anxious to avoid adopting a normative view of essential man; only the "human condition," not human nature, can be meaningfully discussed. Whether Platonic or Cartesian, Kantian or Hegelian, a philosophy that tries to introduce rational considerations into the *vita activa's* highest mode, political action, is in the service of oppression.

Finally, Hannah Arendt drew on the political existentialist tradition in viewing history as an illegitimate source of constraints on freedom. In her 1946 essay, she applauded Husserl's success in freeing modern philosophy from "the fetters of historicism." Here a possible

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analogy with Burke suggested by Margaret Canovan fails to hold, for although she shared Burke's appeal to artifice over nature, she lacked his sense of the historical concreteness of specific liberties, which were really privileges passed down from generation to generation. To a significant extent, political existentialism was directed against the prevailing historicist orthodoxy, bourgeois or Marxist, which dominated German thought from the time of Herder to the 1920s. The argument that everything must be dissolved in the solvent of history, whose dead hand weighs on the living present, seemed unnecessarily oppressive to an existentialist mentality proclaiming the permissibility and possibility of everything. What makes Hannah Arendt's version of the revolt against history novel is that it was directed not only against history understood as the working out of laws or trends outside of human control, an understanding which combined both religious and natural scientific impulses, but also against the alternative view that history is made by men. This latter assumption, which stems from Vico and informed Marxism, was objectionable to her because it reflects the view of man as *homo faber* creating a world of useful products rather than that of man as free actor. Vico's humanistic stress on the creative origins of history, so Hannah Arendt argued, mirrors the early modern world's new confidence in the power of technology, which involves the domination of nature and hence violence.

Miss Arendt's faith in the possibility of cutting through the restraining bonds of the past makes one of the more controversial aspects of her analysis of totalitarianism less obscure, if still difficult to support. Although she treated Nazism and Stalinism in solely systemic terms as the incursion of the most automatic processes of society into the political realm, she nonetheless argued that totalitarianism operates on the premise that men can be made entirely anew. In other words, for the Enlightenment's belief in the infinite perfectibility of man, totalitarianism substitutes an infinite degradability. Underlying both, however, is a common disregard for the intractibility of historical conditioning and the limits of human nature. That Hannah Arendt accepted the premise that totalitarianism does indeed represent a remaking of man in wholly new terms, which is best shown in the concentration camps, illustrates her scorn for the historical limitations resisting such a total transformation. Like the existentialists, she tended to believe in unlimited human malleability with little regard for historical constraints, even if at times she came to share the existentialists' grudging acknowledgement of the power of "situation" to qualify that freedom.

Hannah Arendt's animus towards society, history, reason, utilitar-

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ianism, and essentialism all coalesced in what Canovan calls her "continuous dialogue" with Marx, an interchange that justifies more than cursory comment. Like the political existentialists, she sought a way to transcend the left-right, socialism-capitalism alternatives bequeathed by the nineteenth century, and in so doing to go beyond Marxism. In her reply to Gershom Scholem's attack on *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, she wrote: "I came late to an understanding of Marx's importance because I was interested neither in history nor in politics when I was young. If I can be said to 'have come from anywhere,' it is from the tradition of German philosophy." Precisely when she began to read Marx seriously is difficult to determine, but what is clear is that she absorbed a now old-fashioned interpretation of Marx which she tenaciously defended until her death. It is the Marx of the Second International, which is still current in orthodox Communist circles, although scarcely anywhere else. As she stated in *Between Past and Future*, the separation of Marx from Engel's interpretation of him, "an opinion current among Marx scholars," is one she rejected. Since she wrote those words, the "opinion" has become the new orthodoxy with commentators like Lichtheim, Avineri, Schmidt, Rubel, Fetscher, and McClellan endorsing the insight Lukács and Korsch had in the early 1920s. Although there are some residual difficulties, such as explaining why Marx allowed Engels to publish the unfortunate *Anti-Dühring* without apparent objection, the weight of evidence brought to light in the past decade makes her insistence indefensible. Yet to abandon it would undermine what is essentially the Marxist straw man she attacked. In her last years, she was willing to grant the possibility of an "early" and "late" Marx, although the publication of the *Grundrisse* has served to call that distinction into question, just as it has reinforced the Marx-Engels gap.

By holding on to what can be called a discredited view of Marx, she was able to accuse him of several basic failings. First, although recognizing that Marx restored the predominance of the *vita activa*, she argued that he raised the wrong one of its modes to the highest status: that of man as *animal laborans*, whose sole concern is the reproduction of the conditions for biological survival. This means that Marx in her understanding is best categorized as a *Lebensphilosoph* in the tradition of Nietzsche and Bergson. That is, his highest value is life itself, rather than the "world" of crafted artifacts or the remembrance of great deeds in the public realm: As she wrote in *The Human Condition*:

> Within a completely "socialized mankind," whose sole purpose would be the entertaining of the life process—and this is the

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> unfortunately quite unutopian idea that guides Marx's theories—the distinction between labor and work would have completely disappeared; all work would have become labor because all things would be understood, not in their wordly, objective quality, but as results of living labor power and functions of the life process.

There is, of course, something to be said for the contention that Marx glorified labor in a way that reduced other human activities to aspects of the labor process. But what must be understood is that for Marx labor was far more than the reproduction of the conditions necessary for biological survival. It entailed precisely what Miss Arendt designated as work: the creation of a world of objects through man's interaction with nature. It is thus incorrect to state that Marx's goal was the reduction of work to labor when what he wanted was the overcoming of the reified quality of objectification under capitalism, not objectification *per se*. As her treatment of reification as a necessary component in all fabrication indicates, she failed to perceive the crucial distinction Marx makes between objectification and reification. In fact, she mistranslated *Vergegenständlichung* (objectification) as reification, whereas that word is more correctly the translation of *Verdinglichung*. Rather than championing *animal laborans*, Marx was a believer in the power of man as *homo faber*, as Avineri has shown in the chapter he devotes to that concept.

However, Hannah Arendt might have conceded this point and still argued that Marx's work was pernicious because of its reduction of politics to the socioeconomic realm. In several places in her writing, she contended that Marx wanted the public realm to "wither away" with the triumph of socialism. This familiar argument is unfortunate for two reasons. First, the phrase "withering away" was used by Engels in his *Anti-Dühring* ("*der Staat wird nicht 'abgeschafft,' er stirbt ab*") and not by Marx, who consistently used the term *Aufhebung* instead. As is well known, *Aufhebung* implies preservation as well as cancellation and transcendence. Secondly, even if one accepts Engels's formula as representing his friend's thought, the phrase "withering away" refers to the state, not politics as a whole. That the two need not be equated is clear in Hannah Arendt's own call for the replacement of the sovereign nation-state by a federated system of councils, which of course would foster political life. What Marx wanted was the transcendence of the Hegelian distinction between civil society and the state, bourgeois "man" and the citizen, not the reduction of the state to society or the political citizen to natural man. Although one may share Hannah Arendt's skepticism about reconciling these oppositions

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under communism, it is simply misleading to chastise Marx for sociological reductionism. Moreover, and this is the third argument against her, there are abundant passages in Marx's concrete historical writings, most notably in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, where he recognizes the relative autonomy of the political sphere at certain moments in history. That he was far more cynical about its serving as the arena for public freedom before the end of capitalism is another matter; what is crucial to note is that his image of man, either in the present or in some communist future, was far more than that of *animal laborans*.

Hannah Arendt's blindness on this point was reflected in her inexplicable neglect of twentieth-century Marxist theoreticians such as Gramsci, Korsch, Pannekoek, and Lefebvre, who have found in Marx's work a philosophy of *praxis* rather than a theory of economic determinism. That she was perhaps somewhat aware of this potential in Marxism can be argued from her very positive attitude towards Rosa Luxemburg, whose endorsement of the council movement and criticism of the Bolsheviks she applauded. But her grasp of the history of Marxist theory must be judged uncertain as she neglected to acknowledge the extent to which Rosa Luxemburg was still beholden to the economism of her orthodox opponents in the Second International. In fact, Rosa Luxemburg's polemic with Lenin must be understood not merely as a critique of his dictatorial methods, but also as a warning against seizing the political initiative before economic conditions are ripe. Margaret Canovan fails to go beyond the misunderstanding of her subject when she writes: "Much of *On Revolution* is strongly reminiscent of the views of Rosa Luxemburg: the emphasis on the spontaneity of revolution as against theories of historical necessity or professional planning." What she misunderstands is that the spontaneity Rosa Luxemburg championed meant the unforced combination of objective and subjective factors produced by the logic of capitalism and raising the consciousness of the working class. It did not mean a purely subjectivist, political intervention into the course of history. One cannot imagine Rosa Luxemburg praising the American Revolution in the way that Hannah Arendt did in *On Revolution*: "the course of the American Revolution tells an unforgettable story and is apt to teach a unique lesson: for this revolution did not break out but was made by men in common deliberation and on the strength of mutual pledges." Although it is true that she emphasized the subjective factor in revolutions far more than her less radical counterparts in the Second International, Rosa Luxemburg never succeeded in reconciling this side of her theory with her equally firm commitment to mechanical materialism. In this sense, she was a transitional figure and Miss

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Arendt would have done better to seek allies among more recent theoreticians of *praxis*.

There is one final point to be made about Hannah Arendt's "continuous dialogue" with Marx, which concerns one of her major preoccupations, the question of violence. In her lexicon, it will be recalled, violence is understood as inherently nonpolitical because of its instrumental character. It is conceptually distinct from power, which involves men acting without coercion on the basis of equality, although in practice power and violence often exist together. In *Between Past and Future* (1961), she berated Marx for assuming violence is the midwife of history:

> To Marx . . . violence or rather the possession of the means of violence is the constituent element of all forms of government; the state is the instrument of the ruling class by means of which it oppresses and exploits, and the whole sphere of political action is characterized by the use of violence.

But by the time of *Crises of the Republic* (1972), she had reversed herself entirely and now claimed Marx in support of her distinction:

> The strong Marxist rhetoric of the New Left coincides with the steady growth of the entirely non-Marxian conviction, proclaimed by Mao Tse-Tung, that "Power grows out of the barrel of a gun." To be sure, Marx was aware of the role of violence in history, but this role was to him secondary.

Sartre, she goes on to argue, is thus far closer to Sorel and Fanon than he is to Marx because of his endorsement of political violence.

What is important about this reversal is not the fact that she was guilty of a self-contradiction, which is inevitable in such a large body of work, but rather the warning it provides to follow her reasoning in this area with an eye open for other inconsistencies. They are in fact not hard to find. In her discussion of *homo faber,* Miss Arendt argued that the violence done to the natural material fashioned into a humanized product is necessarily entailed in any act of fabrication. In what is normally seen as the political realm, the chief act of fabrication is that of the secure founding of a polity, which provides the public space necessary for the exercise of freedom. In *On Revolution,* she emphasized the necessity of such a foundation for a stable society, which is one reason she preferred the American to the French Revolution. The prototype of all foundings is that of Rome, which she first described in *Between Past and Future* as free of violence:

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> Like the Romans, Machiavelli and Robespierre felt founding was the central political action . . . but unlike the Romans, to whom this was an event of the past, they felt that for this supreme "end" all "means," and chiefly the means of violence, were justified. They understood the act of founding entirely in the image of making. . . . [It is] because of his rediscovery of the foundation experience and his *reinterpretation* of it in terms of the justification of (violent) means for a supreme end, that Machiavelli may be regarded as the ancestor of modern revolutions. (Italics added).

By *On Revolution*, however, she realized that the Roman experience of founding also had a violent element expressed in the legend of Romulus's slaying of Remus. But her uneasiness about overemphasizing the violent nature of the act of founding led her to observe:

> It was perhaps because of the inner affinity between the arbitrariness inherent in all beginnings, and human potentialities for crime that the Romans decided to derive their descendance not from Romulus, who had slain Remus, but from Aeneas.

Although she admitted that even Aeneas had been involved in a war with the native Italians, she excused this by saying that according to Virgil, his war was fought to undo the earlier war against Troy. The point of this argument is that even the foundation of Rome harkened back to an earlier tradition, but what comes through far clearer is the affinity between beginnings and violence.

What makes this point worth stressing is that such an affinity serves to muddy her distinction between violence and politics, the latter having been defined over and over again in terms of the capacity to begin. By *Crises of the Republic*, the confusion was total as she wrote:

> A characteristic of human action is that it always begins something new, and this does not mean that it is ever permitted to start *ab ovo*, to create *ex nihilo*. In order to make room for one's own action, something that was there before must be removed or destroyed, and things as they were before are changed.

Thus the watertight separation between violence and politics proves in the end to be porous, and we are left with the age-old suspicion that the violence at the origin of a polity lingers beneath the surface however legitimate its foundation may appear to later generations.

If, then, one can say that Hannah Arendt's grasp of Marx, her chief polemical rival, was uncertain, and that her distinction between politics and violence is less than convincing, how satisfactory was the remainder of her political theory? Can her brand of "tender" political

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existentialism be said to have surmounted the difficulties encountered by her "tough" predecessors in the 1920s? Was she merely a proselytizer for what Benjamin Schwartz has dubbed "the religion of politics," or did she provide what Margaret Canovan calls "both a new and noteworthy example of political thought, and also a demonstration that genre is by no means dead?" The short answer, at least for this writer, is that despite the obvious breadth of her knowledge and the unquestionable ingenuity of her mind, the political thought of Hannah Arendt is ultimately as problematic as her historical scholarship. Built on a foundation of arbitrary definitions and questionable, if highly imaginative, interpretations of history and previous political thought, her system is vulnerable to many of the objections that led to the shipwreck of her political existentialist predecessors.

A chief source of this failure is what Canovan recognizes as the "lop-sided" quality of her theory. That is, in trying to restore the relative autonomy of politics in the face of sociological reductionism and the growing domination of society itself, she left herself vulnerable to a number of obvious charges. By locating freedom and equality exclusively in the political realm, she condemned *by definition* the nonpolitical to eternal inequality and oppression. As she frankly conceded, the *polis,* her favorite prototype of a political community, was made possible by the institution of slavery which liberated the full citizens of Athens from the household, which was ruled by necessity. In the modern world, where slavery is harder to justify, private property is the *sine qua non* for political participation. The obviously class-oriented nature of this argument is mitigated only marginally by Hannah Arendt's admission in *Caises of the Republic* that:

> Our problem today is not how to expropriate the expropriators, but, rather, how to arrange matters so that the masses, dispossessed by industrial society in capitalist and socialist systems, can regain property.

What makes this statement untenable is the assumption that the masses once had sufficient property to free them for political action, which they should now "regain." What makes it even more objectionable is that she provided no means whatsoever to help in this reappropriation, for in *On Revolution,* she categorically stated that: "Nothing, we might say today, could be more obsolete than to attempt to liberate mankind from poverty by political means; nothing could be more futile and more dangerous."

The modern unleashing of economic forces which might serve as a precondition for the universalizing of private property she equated

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with the victory of wealth over property, by which she meant the glorification of productivity, consumption, and abundance rather than a stable and secure holding in the world. Although one can sympathize with her criticism of unbounded economic growth as an answer to social dilemmas, without at least some expansion of the wealth of society, no universalization of private property is even remotely possible. Because of her general hostility to the world of *animal laborans*, she failed to give a convincing social and economic basis to her political utopia.

The result is that Hannah Arendt left herself vulnerable to the charge of elitism, even though she rejected the label in *One Revolution*:

> My quarrel with the "elite" is that the term implies an oligarchic form of government, the domination of the many by the rule of a few. From this, one can only conclude—as indeed our whole tradition of political thought has concluded—that the essence of politics is rulership and that the dominant political passion is the passion to rule or to govern. This, I propose is profoundly untrue.

What makes this defense implausible is that even granting the possibility of an isonomic interaction among the members of a political elite, it is disingenuous to call the relationship between those happy few and the rest of the population anything but hierarchical and elitist. It would be little consolation for the masses on the bottom of the heap, as little as it must have been for Athenian slaves, to be reassured that their inferiority was incidental to the "essence, the very substance of their [masters'] lives, which is freedom." It would be even less to hear that their oppression cannot be justly called political, because by *definition* politics cannot oppress. What is nonpolitical, she argued, need not concern itself with equality: "It may be that ancient political theory, which held that economics, since it was bound up with the necessities of life, needed the rule of masters to function, was not so wrong after all."

Hannah Arendt's insensitivity to this issue is captured at its most perverse in her observation that the failure to confront the question of slavery in the American Revolution was a key source of its "success," when it is clear that "success" has been mocked by that neglect ever since. One can only surmise an unfeeling disdain for the nonpolitical masses, which is also reflected in *ex cathedra* statements in *On Revolution* such as:

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> The hidden wish of poor men is not "To each according to his needs, but "To each according to his desires." And while it is true that freedom can come only to those whose needs have been fulfilled, it is equally true that it will escape those who are bent upon living from their desires.

What is questionable in this passage is not the defensible insight that unlimited desires can produce unintended misery, but rather the assumption that the ethic of infinite wants is a function of poverty, as if rich men through the centuries have known when to stop when their "needs" were satisfied. The poor are not so much the source of the consumption ethic as its worst victims, especially under an advanced capitalism so dependent on the perpetual creation of new desires. How we are to distinguish between legitimate needs and illegitimate wants is, of course, another matter and one which Hannah Arendt's work never attempts to address.

But even if one were to accept Hannah Arendt's pessimism about extending the free life of the *polis* beyond a select few, there are still considerable difficulties in her normative description of political action. Both conceptually and historically, her view of politics as a performing art utterly uncorrupted by extraneous considerations is without foundation. Conceptually, as we have seen earlier, her stress on the importance of beginnings in action led her perilously close to the destructive violence she was at pains to distinguish from the truly political. Moreover, there is a further irony in the fact that the very "aestheticization of politics" she championed may well have a special affinity for violence, as her friend Walter Benjamin warned during the fascist era. Similarly, her frequent insistence on birth, or "natality" as she insisted on calling it, as the prototype of these beginnings ties action to the rhythms of the natural world, which she usually denigrated as the sphere of the *animal laborans*. Likewise, her assertion that politics and utilitarianism are incompatible is undercut by her acknowledgement that the men of the polis did have an implicit goal beyond the sheer joy of political participation: the achievement of worldly immortality through the performance of glorious and memorable deeds. Such an admission, of course, begs an important question, for how can the criteria used to establish what are "glorious and memorable deeds" escape being nonpolitical themselves?

Hannah Arendt failed to ask this question because of the implicit existentialist premises of her argument. Thus in her 1946 *Partisan Review* essay on *Existenzphilosophie*, she asserted that without a secure, objective reality, a Being, in which truth can be said to reside,

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the only suitable response is a kind of heroism: "The hero's gesture has not accidentally become *the* pose of philosophy since Nietzsche; it requires heroism to live in the world as Kant left it." Later in that piece, she endorsed Jaspers's call for an "unconditioned deed that invokes transcendence" as the way to assert man's freedom in "extreme situations." All that was missing was her subsequent insistence that the only arena in which such "unconditioned deeds" can be performed is the political, and that was not far behind when she argued:

> This "deed" arising out of extreme situations appears in the world through communication with others, who as my fellows and through the appeal to our common reason guaranteed the universal; through activity it carries out the freedom of Man in the world and becomes thereby "a seed, though perishing, of the creation of a world."

To a political existentialist, glory and heroism may seem self-evident values indistinguishable from the political life itself, but others who have entered the public realm for less self-centered and melodramatic reasons may well demur. Although one might accept the notion of the banality of evil, to assume that banality is itself evil is another matter. Indeed, one might wonder if Hannah Arendt had not adopted some of the Prussian values a Berlin Jew struggling with her own identity might absorb through a kind of "identification with the aggressor," just as Rahel Varnhagen surrounded herself with a salon of powerful and worldly gentiles a century before.

Such an *ad hominem* speculation, however, is not even necessary to undercut her argument, for this can be done from some of her own insights in other contexts. Thus, as she stressed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, one of the most sinister characteristics of totalitarian systems, best shown in the Nazi attitude towards the Jews, is their indifference to utilitarian considerations. A politics that is oblivious to the means-ends continuum and the consequences of its actions risks descending into the realm of fantasy in which the inexorable logic of an ideology can justify even self-destructive behavior. The "expressive" moment of politics need not be seen as the absolute negation of the instrumental.

Similarly, Hannah Arendt's insistence that rationalism and the search for truth have no place in the public realm left her, as it did the political existentialists of the 1920s, with no defense against an untruthful, self-deceptive politics, whose consequences she recognized in her essay on the Pentagon Papers. Having earlier concluded that "our ability to lie—but not necessarily our ability to tell the truth—

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belongs among the few obvious, demonstrable data that confirms human freedom" and accordingly that there was an "undeniable affinity of lying with action, with changing the world—in short with politics," she was essentially defenseless against the charge that the totalitarian politics of the "big lie" and her own vision of an ideal politics were curiously alike. Her attempt to argue that factual, as opposed to theoretical truth, provided an outer limit on the practice of lying because of the stubborn irreversibility of facts was a weak resolution to this problem for she admitted that "contingent" facts are "never compellingly true." Once again her reliance on idiosyncratic definitions—the search for truth, she tells us, is an isolated, singular activity, whereas the essence of politics is discursive, intersubjective opinion-sharing—led her into dangerous waters.

If examined historically her examples of pure political action prove equally uncertain. Thus, as Schwartz has pointed out, she never reflected on the source of the Socratic turn away from the life of the *polis* in the name of reason: "Is it possible," he asks, "that, living as closely as they did to the 'public space' of the Athenian assembly, they were aware that the public realm offers no escape from the self-interest, lowly intrigues, and what seems to have been the manipulations of some of those whom they called sophists?" When it comes to Machiavellian *virtu* Hannah Arendt offered no real evidence to show that its pursuit remained unsullied by the more mundane issues of Renaissance politics. Similarly, in her discussion of the American Revolution, she admitted that the major activity of the founding fathers was the creation of a constitution, which, by her definition, puts them under the sign of *homo faber*. Indeed, all legislation, as she saw it, is nonpolitical because of its constitutive function. Finally, her appeal to the councils, soviets, and *Räte* as examples of man's persistent desire for a public space in which to speak and act in the hope of attaining worldly immortality, although not without its virtues, can only be judged as historically inaccurate. Workers' councils, as the name implies, were designed from the very first to seize economic power at the factory site itself. Nonetheless, in *On Revolution* Hannah Arendt chastised the councils for betraying the purely political goal she assigned them:

> The fatal mistake of the councils has always been that they themselves did not distinguish clearly between participation in public affairs and administration or management of things in the public interest. In the form of workers' councils, they have again and again tried to take over the management of the factories, and all these attempts have ended in dismal failure.

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But in *Crises of the Republic*, after reiterating her belief that collective ownership is a contradiction in terms, she conflated workers' management and the political role of the councils:

> In Yugoslavia we have the "system of self-management" in the factories, a new version of the old "workers' councils," which, incidentally, also never became part of orthodox socialist or communist doctrine—despite Lenin's "all power to the *soviets*."

Thus, the "fatal mistake" of mixing economics and politics seems not so fatal after all, and once again the absolute purity of the political proves an unworkable myth. Her search for an historical embodiment of Jaspers's "extreme situation" in which "unconditional deeds" were committed was ultimately fruitless.

With all of these failings, it might seem as if the object of all the recent eulogizing may well be as forgotten in a few years as Alfred Bäumler or Carl Schmitt is today. Even the tempered admiration of Margaret Canovan may seem premature when Hannah Arendt's role as a latter-day political existentialist is put in its proper perspective. And yet, although the burden of my argument would seem to endorse this prediction, my intuition is that she will have a somewhat higher reputation among future intellectual historians than her predecessors now enjoy. First, because of her unerring instinct for the issues that excite public controversy, her place is secure in any history of the New York intellectual community over the last quarter-century. The furor over the Eichmann book alone justifies her centrality in any account of the intellectual migration of Central European Jews to America, as has in fact been recognized in H. Stuart Hughes' recent *The Sea Change*. She will also have an inevitable role in any history of Cold War ideology because of her seminal role in establishing the category of totalitarianism to cover systems of both the left and right. And paradoxically, she will also have to be included in accounts of the New Left for her theoretical legitimation of its political existentialist impulse, even though its aestheticization of politics ultimately led to an excess she came to deplore.

Secondly, the type of political theorizing in which she engaged will continue to serve for many as a welcome bulwark against the engulfing tide of political science, as well as a reminder that the political need not be reduced to the question "who governs?" Although it is questionable to identify the free interaction Hannah Arendt applauded with some ideal political community and damn the rest as society (just as it is inaccurate to condemn all sociology as anti-interactionist), there is real value in arguing that wherever one may

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find what she calls political action, it is inappropriate to subsume it under the same categories used to explain processes or structures. Uncoerced, symmetrically organized communication which leads to the creation of shared meanings is not equivalent to the technical, instrumental, utilitarian relations that characterize so much of human interaction.

The fruitfulness of this distinction, which is one of the healthier legacies of the hermeneutic and existentialist movements, is perhaps most apparent in the work of Jürgen Habermas, the leading member of the Frankfurt School's second generation. Habermas's debt to Hannah Arendt has rarely been noticed, but in both *Strukturwandeil der Öffentlichkeit* and *Theorie und Praxis*, he cited *The Human Condition* with approval, crediting it (along with the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer) for calling his attention to the Aristotelian distinction between *techne* and *praxis*. Without rigidly absolutizing the difference between politics and society, Habermas has pursued the foundations of the type of communicative interaction Miss Arendt endorsed by drawing on a combination of philosophical sources from Hegel to Wittgenstein. He has, however, avoided the *politique pour la politique* dilemma by linking communicative competence in an undistorted speech situation to an emancipatory cognitive interest that embraces all men, not merely a political elite. Unlike Hannah Arendt, Habermas has been keenly aware of the social preconditions which may make such a utopian communicative situation possible. As he wrote in a review of *On Revolution*:

> We can meaningfully discuss the conditions of political freedom only in connection with an emancipation from domination. This category of domination must not separate political force (*Gewalt*) from social power (*Macht*), but instead must show them as they both are: as repression. Under conditions of social dependency the best right to political freedom remains ideology. On the other hand, Hannah Arendt insists with good reason that the realization of welfare does not correspond to the emancipation from domination.

Hannah Arendt must also be praised for her attempt to rescue the notion of freedom from its purely "negative" interpretation, although she was wrong to deny the moment of "freedom from" in any more embracing definition of that term. To have a non-Marxist theorist stress the importance of ending political alienation and realize that an intersubjective definition of freedom has something to be said for it is a refreshing change from the conventional state of affairs. As all observers have noted, Hannah Arendt was difficult to place along any

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normal left-right political axis (as in certain respects the political existentialists were as well), which means that reading her works requires a healthy suspension of received notions about our range of choices. And lastly, Miss Arendt will continue to be consulted by students of our era because of her frequently trenchant analyses of topical issues, many of which transcend the limitations of her more basic theoretical position.

But having allowed these strengths, what must finally be recognized is that the version of the human condition on which all her work rested will simply not wash. Despite her intention to restore the proper notion of freedom, Hannah Arendt's stubborn insistence on the split between society and polity undermined whatever hope her theory might have had for illuminating the conditions under which that freedom could be realized. Political existentialism was an obfuscating ideology in the 1920s, and one not entirely blameless in the rise of fascism; it must be judged no less of an ideology half a century later, although luckily its potential to blight our lives is far smaller than it was when Hannah Arendt, ironically fleeing from fascism, first succumbed to its dangerous charms.

Leon Botstein

Two claims are at the heart of Martin Jay's critique of Hannah Arendt. First, he argues that her basic theoretical position contains a watertight separation of the political from the nonpolitical, of politics from economics and society. Jay views Arendt's discussion of action, of the importance of speech and the human capacity for new beginnings within the political realm as evidence of a political existentialism, a label Jay applies without enthusiasm or approval. Second, Jay claims that Arendt misread Marx and oversimplified him, that she used a dated, inaccurate orthodoxy. This led Arendt, in Jay's opinion, to ambivalent conclusions regarding violence, the historical process as a whole and man's past and future role in history.

Both of these claims will be examined in detail. At the outset, however, Jay's method and objective merit brief consideration. His is the approach of the intellectual historian in its very best American form, whose intent transcends any debate anterior to political theory. He has attempted a comprehensive assessment of Arendt, not only as a

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theoretician, but as an actor within history. Arendt's standing, and the appropriate descriptive label for her within the pantheon of important twentieth-century intellectuals is of concern to Jay, as is the somewhat oblique assertion of error and historical responsibility with which he ends his paper. However, Jay fails to grasp Arendt's own method and intent as an intellectual of *praxis*, for whom speech and action had an effective place within the events which surrounded her writing. Post-World War II politics, Zionism and Israel, Nazism and American politics, its heritage and activity in the 1960s and 1970s, were movements and events in which Arendt thought the intellectual had more than passive responsibility *qua* intellectual. Consequently, any intellectual historian in dealing with Arendt ought to resist the temptation merely to label her positions with phrases from within the history of thought, as Jay often does (e.g. antirationalist, decisionist, subjectivist). Hannah Arendt was not, in either self-image or practice, a professional academic. Her ambitions were to act through speech within historical events, to speak with impact to a broad thinking readership. A comprehensive intellectual assessment of Arendt requires, inclusive of a traditional etiology for her thought, more in the way of a biographical and historical context for each of her writings. Nonetheless, this caveat with respect to Jay's paper is not essential to a rejoinder to his interpretation of Arendt.

Arendt's discussion of politics centered on an idealized view of the *polis*, one which she held throughout her career. This is especially clear in two of her key writings in which she explored the distinction between politics and society, *The Human Condition* and her essay "What is Freedom?". But the stress on political action as a distinct human potential for change appears also in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, primarily in the third and last section. In that context, Arendt perceived a capacity for "miracle," for an ultimate response despite total domination. Man's judgment and ability to begin anew, to act, were perhaps the only rescue from extreme circumstances in which conditions of society and economics provided no short or long range causal hope for liberation.

In contrast, despite faults in the historical narrative of the first two sections of her *Origins*, Arendt quite brilliantly describes the actual interplay among politics, economics and social change in anti-Semitism and imperialism. Arendt's view of the social transformations of the nineteenth century, of the distinction between mob and mass, reflect a sophisticated understanding not only of the concrete interplay between politics and society but also of what Max Weber called *Sinnzusammenhaenge*, the meaningful interconnections of the political and economic dimensions within historical social action.

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With the exception of the 1946 *Partisan Review* essay, Jay bases his arguments that Arendt sought to "liberate political action from its subordination" to other dimensions of life on her theoretical writings from the 1950s and early 1960s, not on her earlier historical or journalistic efforts. In these texts, Arendt addressed her political concern about how the post-World War II era could approach the future with its experience of totalitarianism. Arendt's perception, both of the fleeting effective integrity of revolutionary violence and the postwar despair of the French existentialists and former members of the resistance (best expressed for her in the aphorism of René Char with which she opened *Between Past and Future*) led her to concentrate extensively on the question of political renewal. How could a politics, a condition of freedom conducive to the pursuit of human excellence (in the sense of *arete*) and public virtue (in its Roman meaning) be inspired for the postwar era?

As the prologue to *The Human Condition* (1958) clearly indicates, Arendt considered the social and economic questions facing mankind less in need of immediate attention as a result of the past achievement and future promise of contemporary science and technology. Her economic optimism, dated from today's vantage point, was based on the seeming historical paradox presented by modern science: the ability to satisfy, adequately, material wants coincided with the ability to annihilate mankind with nuclear warfare. The solutions to questions of economy and society, issues of ownership and distribution, of social equality, appeared technically possible. They became acutely dependent on prior political action and organization because the modern world was one of potential material sufficiency, if not abundance. This fact illuminates the quote from her 1970 interview (hardly a central text) which Jay considers characteristic, and interprets pejoratively to assert Arendt's "marginal" concern for questions of poverty and slavery. In fact, Arendt's quote is from a context in which she seeks merely to disabuse the reader of the seemingly clear ideological distinctions between the contemporary practices of capitalism and socialism.

The model of the *polis*, where politics was separate as public, and economic behavior segregated as a matter of private household, became appropriate in the 1950s since the promises of science and technology to satisfy the economic demands and sustain a reasonable standard of material life in the modern world became the functional but not the moral equivalent of the institution of slavery and the private household in ancient Greece. Arendt's use of the *polis* model was always heuristic, never literal in a manner that implied a cavalier disregard for

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the fact of slavery. Arendt consistently wrote interpretive history, around a pressing issue, concept or category, using the past with the intention to spur action and thought towards what she regarded as a desirable end. The stress on external rather than internal freedom, on political action as a separate potential of man, was part of her attempt to combat a growing alienation within the industrial affluent West, an alienation explicit in work, in the *animal laborans*, an alienation from a bureaucratized life increasingly devoid of a meaningful *telos*.

The *polis*, and later, in *On Revolution*, the American Revolution, both lent themselves to an interpretation as moments in which men acted upon virtue, upon principle, and created freedom and political equality for an existence with meaning beyond material needs. Arendt's view of political action as separate was a reading of history which sought to redress the momentum of two long evolving historical patterns: 1) the redefinition of man's fundamental nature, from that of a political being to one as a social animal (for Arendt, a misreading of Aristotle); and 2) the internalization of meaning, towards the interior dialogue of "me-myself" characteristic of St. Augustine and the subsequent Christian tradition of the theology of personal conscience. The practice of political action in the public realm might combat these historical trends.

Jay mistakenly assumes that Arendt's theory of political action is without a profound concern for ends. He supposes that it is a theory of action for action's sake, not surprisingly then, he considers Arendt to have been sympathetic with Lessing's supposed "relativism." However, Arendt's admiration for the courage to act in the political, public realm always carried with it the concern for principle, for a commitment to ends beyond private self-interest. Such courage is what she called virtue. That capacity for action on principle constituted evidence for the miracle of beginning, for the potential of renewal which man possessed even in extreme circumstances. What Jay sees as relativistic is Arendt's ultimate hesitation, shared with Lessing, not, for example, to die for the truth, nor to sustain convictions, but rather to arrogantly assume no room for error, for challenging discourse, and for pluralism. Arendt ends her 1958 speech "On Humanity in Dark Times" with Lessing's statement that there is and always will remain a distinction between man's sense of truth and the inscrutable truth possessed only by God. Jay's notion that Arendt admired Lessing as a relativist is a trivialization not only of Arendt but of Lessing as well, not only of text but of context. Arendt was accepting a public prize with a speech to a German audience only thirteen years after the Holocaust. As she said at the outset of that 1958 Hamburg speech, her

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acceptance of an award itself involved an obligation to a political act of courage. Her speech, with its stress on the need to step away from the arrogance of men who claim the exclusive possession of transcendent truth in politics must be understood in terms of her sense of obligation to that audience. Her audience had, after all, only recently experienced and demonstrated the rhetoric and action of a "new order," whose criteria and values were the sole, exclusive "truth," permitting of no counterclaims or arguments of refutation. No wonder Arendt held Lessing's ultimate hesitation up to that audience as a model of humanism. We see here Arendt's method, her own actualization of speech as political action, of her theory as *praxis*.

Jay's critique of Arendt's reading of Marx disregards Arendt's consistent use and for some, misuse, of texts. Her writings were never exigetical. They were not interpretations of key theorists. Rather, Arendt discussed historical questions of theoretical significance, such as authority, education, culture, domination, freedom, violence and the like. Her use of intellectual figures of the past was twofold. First, as in the case of Marx (and Galileo, Machiavelli and Plato as well), she did not always distinguish between their intentions and texts and the subsequent historical perception of those intentions and texts. Second, she used writings and arguments from the intellectual tradition as items of lasting significance which could be reinterpreted by differing historical generations with an eye toward political action and thought within their existing contemporary world. Arendt's concern with the impact of storytelling, with the evolution of tradition through the active remembrance of deeds, with myth, with an Old Testament-like recognition of creation through speech, led her to use past speech and past writers as the grounds for her own new intellectual creations. Consequently, her search was not usually for a *correct* interpretation of Aristotle, for example, but rather a suggestive, defensible one, one which, no matter how unusual, could be supported by texts.

In the case of Marx, her concern was not Marx himself but the subsequent intellectual significance and understanding of Marx. The Arendtian view of Marx, which Jay correctly identifies as not accurately Marx, smacks perhaps of an unsubtle and unsympathetic reduction of Marx. Yet that was certainly a common and important perception of Marx in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century thought and politics. As Arendt argued in her essay "Tradition and the Modern Age," the "inverting" of the intellectual and political tradition by Marx, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard was a key historical fact.

Jay cannot deny that the Marx Arendt described was indeed the Marx for serious political groups and intellectuals in Arendt's lifetime

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and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in general. Arendt's friendship with Walter Benjamin and others in the Frankfurt School, as well as hers and her husband's with Brecht, renders implausible the idea that she was not keenly aware of the reinterpretation of Marx by Lukács and others. In terms of the interaction between political theory and historical change, Arendt did not consider the better understood Marx, the Marx of "objective" history. Again, Arendt did not write about Marx *per se*. Rather, hers was a quest for an effective interpretative history, for a political *praxis* through theory. Her use of Marx, however inadequate from a narrow historical and textual vantage point, appeared legitimate, especially in *The Human Condition*. Furthermore, it is not clear that Jay's convincing objections to Arendt's simplified notion of Marx damages at all the cogency of her political theoretical claims.

Take, for example, the question of violence. Jay sees ambivalence, if not contradiction in her view, not only of violence in politics, but also of Marx's role in the encouragement of violence as a means of political change. In the two passages Jay chooses as contradictory, there is really no contradiction at all. In the first quotation, which is from the "Tradition and the Modern Age" essay, Arendt speaks of Marx's view of violence as a mode of political action. She contrasts violence with other methods of politics. In the second quotation, from 1972, she addresses herself to Marx's view of the causes of historical change. Jay fails to complete the second Arendt quote. In fact he ends it misleadingly with a period when there is a semi-colon after which is the following phrase: "not violence but the contradiction inherent in society brought about its end." The mode of political action to which historical contradictions lead is violent revolution. In that sense, Arendt thought Marx placed violence in the center of discussion as an instrument of political action. Consequently, violence was of primary concern. Yet, as a cause of historical change, violent action, notably when taking place without the appropriate historical context, would not be, in and of itself, a cause of historical change. Violence, in Arendt's view of Marx, was primary as an instrument of politics and quite secondary as a basic cause of historical change. The special consideration of violence as a valid and crucial means of political action, much like the substitution of power and coercion for ancient notions of legitimate authority, was influenced by political theory, and certainly by Marx. Arendt sought to counteract those notions by searching back into classical models. Her affection for some of the politics of the late 1960s notwithstanding, Arendt believed that in the nuclear age, in a period after fascism, the use of violence and coercion

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as primary means of action had ceased to possess inherent and reliable boundaries consistent with human survival.

Jay's imprecise reading of two of Arendt's passages on Marx and the question of violence calls for a closer textual review of his paper and his interpretation of Arendt. Although Jay starts out by repeating the oft-remarked enigmatic character of Arendt's thought with regard to traditional categories of left and right, he quickly demonstrates a rhetorical habit of shading Arendt's views with a conservative slant through the use of key phrases. He speaks of her "relentless equation" of Communism and Nazism in the *Origins.* In fact her equation was with Stalinism, even though the maintenance of a distinction between Stalinism and Communism has not always been fashionable. Furthermore her equation, never a "relentless" one, was not in terms of ideology, but rather in terms of political organization and the practice of terror and coercion. Furthermore, the *Origins* does not make a broad based claim about the "inexorable logic" of communism per se, as Jay goes on to assert.

Such shaded readings crop up often in Jay's analysis. For example he laconically repeats the claim that Arendt alleges "complicity" on the part of the Jews in her Eichmann book. Suffice it to say that such a claim remains, at best, controversial. Arendt's book can be read without the impression that she accused the Jews of responsibility for the Holocaust, despite her effort, present already in her *Origins,* to understand the dynamics between victims and perpetrators, and despite discussion of instances of Jewish collaborative work. In my opinion, it is to misread her text and her intent to see the issue of the Eichmann book as an "allegation of Jewish complicity." The subtitle of the book and its explicit relation to her posthumous works on "Thinking" and "Willing" hint more accurately at the book as a powerful work of ethical-historical reinterpretation of the Holocaust, not as an exercise in the specific reassignment of historical responsibility onto the Jews.

When Jay presents the 1946 *Partisan Review* essay, he once again engages in a slanted reading, taking quotes significantly out of context. Arendt does not avoid reference to political implications of *Existenzphilosophie* as Jay asserts. She contrasts Jaspers with Heidegger and concludes her essay with praise for the fact that *Existenzphilosophie* has "left its period of egoism" and has recognized that man is more "than any of his thoughts"; that man's nature demands that he "will more than himself." This, in the context of her concern for a new concept of humanity, is in Arendt's terms, a political claim.

In the 1946 essay Jay thinks he has discovered an Arendtian "ploy," borrowed from Heidegger: reliance with "persistence" on the

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etymological significance of a word. This leads Jay to the erroneous conclusion that Arendt thought that "new beginnings out of nothing" were the heart of political action. A close look at Arendt's discussion on the verbs "to begin" and "to act" in her essay "What is Freedom?" reveals that her concern for words is not etymological, but historical in terms of their use by past writers and historical actors. Furthermore, her notion of beginning rests on a consistent view of human nature, which, as she wrote in *The Human Condition*, contains the capacity for contemplation and political action as axioms. Beginnings happen out of man, which is what makes them miraculous—not, as Jay suggests, "out of nothing." Arendt's implicit psychology (psychology is consistently absent from her considerations in a formal sense) is more akin to Rousseau's (despite her distrust of compassion as a political virtue) than to Locke's.

Jay compares Arendt to Schmidt and Bäumler without much textual support from Arendt, but with a key misinterpretation of her view of "inner emigration." Arendt's interest in inner emigration has little to do with her use of Jaspers's concept of inner emigration as an alternative to Heidegger's sympathy with fascism. Rather, inner emigration is a stance for Arendt that is appropriate only to the worldless, to a pariah condition which shuts out political action in the public realm. It is legitimate in the end only for the pariah and in conditions of political coercion and terror. In "On Humanity in Dark Times," Arendt is quite critical of the political "inner emigration" among Germans in the years prior to the seizure of power by the Nazis.

In Jay's extensive discussion of Arendt's separation of the political from the nonpolitical, the key moments of the argument quote from Bäumler rather than Arendt. Jay takes her concern for the "sheer capacity to begin" out of the context of her discussion of freedom. The text Jay chooses is part of a tightly argued section of her essay on freedom in which she contrasts political external freedom with the internal concept of freedom established by Christian tradition. Arendt discusses political external freedom, as a matter not of will or intellect, but of the fact of action. If Jay were to follow her argument as she presented it, he would soon discover that his major contention that Arendt claims that "action should be free of even political goals" is erroneous, for Arendt proceeds in that essay, once she has established political freedom as action, to assert the necessity for virtue, for principles of action which can provide action with the transcendent public purposes without which action would be meaningless. Jay overlooks Arendt's lifelong debt to Kant and her distinction, especially in her discussion of freedom, of formal logical considerations, from

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issues of practical reason and matters of judgment. To say that action and freedom are in some sense equivalent is to assert that true action therefore needs and requires ends. Curiously, Arendt's long discussion of the contrast between *homo faber* and *animal laborans*, between work and labor, reflect a Kantian ethical bias, perhaps transmitted through Jaspers, concerning the necessity in ethical and political theory to consider more than the instrumental—the categorical imperative. Jay's assertion of "decisionism" in Arendt's view of politics, his view of her politics as unhampered by normative constraints, is hard to support by evidence from her writing. Given this too easily established analysis, it is no surprise that Jay calls her a relativist, a label which, as has been argued earlier, fails to fit.

At the center of Jay's interpretation of Arendt's theory of politics and action is his claim that "she believed in unlimited human malleability with little regard for historical constraints." One is mystified as to the source of this claim. Arendt's three major historical works, the biography of *Rahel Varnhagen*, the *Origins*, and the book on Eichmann's trial all testify to her perception of the power of historical constraints on human action. Her discussion of the concentration camp seems to be Jay's evidence of her conviction of man's malleability under extreme circumstances. Yet, precisely because of those harshest of historical facts, Arendt viewed man's capacity to emerge from such circumstances as a "miracle," as an act of ultimate heroic courage.

The Varnhagen and Eichmann books are concerned with the immense effort required by the individual to resist temptations to succumb to extant patterns of life, to inadequate and perhaps dangerous accommodations to the implicit ideologies of historical constraints. Arendt did not underestimate the extreme difficulty of man's exercising freedom and autonomy in the face of history. Take, for example, her view that the powerful hopes born out of heroic action in the French resistance were soon dashed into a bleak future. Such loss of the power of action without a continuing political structure inclusive of freedom, speech, and discourse explains in part her admiration for the American revolution and its history and tradition.

Arendt's analysis of figures in history such as Disraeli, Galileo, Hitler, Eichmann, and even Rahel Varnhagen reflects her sensitive balance between the individual's peculiar contribution to change and his dependence on the formation of personality through historical facts. There is little evidence in Arendt's historic narratives of the belief that individuals can radically avoid the constraints of history. Arendt's criticism of Stefan Zweig reflects her contempt for his belief that he

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could escape his own historical personality and context. Only totalitarianism, through violence and coercion, transmutes historic perceptions of good and evil, produces indifference to evil, without outrage, and generates an inversion of values. The success of the Nazis informed her postwar effort to help protect the future from that singular historical moment when the moral and ethical criteria evolved over time were rendered banal by totalitarianism, itself based on a long historical process as the *Origins* argues.

Jay misinterprets Arendt's analogy between political action and the performing arts, between political action and virtuosity. No doubt Arendt honored excellence. Her view of the performing arts was not, however, merely instrumental, as Jay implies. The characteristic of the performing artist is that he or she acts by definition in public; he or she must transcend the interior dialogue between will and intellect towards action. By his or her profession the performer creates public space. Music without audience and theater without spectators are not music and theater. Arendt used virtuosity in the performing arts as an analogy for the necessity for a commitment to excellence and action in the public realm, a commitment to the result, the lasting result of performance, in fact and future memory as an inspiration to future generations. Far from considering performing art as "uncorrupted by extraneous considerations," Arendt saw it as demanding a special interaction, shared by politics in a public context, a continuous process of action, remembrance and response.

Jay combines his view of Arendt's unconvincing separation of politics from the material conditions of economy and society with her view that she was, despite disclaimers, an elitist. He centers that claim around her "marginal" concern for the material problems of the masses and her "categorical" rejection of political solutions to poverty. The source for this claim of a "categorical" rejection is an incomplete reading from a passage from *On Revolution*. It reveals a fundamental difference between Jay's view of historical change and Arendt's. But more important, Jay trivializes Arendt in the way he quotes the passage. He ends with the word "dangerous" and leaves out the concluding thoughts. The reason that political means are "futile and dangerous" and "obsolete" is because only through politics in the modern age can freedom be sustained. Freedom is one of Arendt's ultimate values, one of her ends.

The reason political means would be "obsolete" as means of social transformation is because of the nature of the violence that the combination of poverty and the lack of political freedom produces. Since Arendt assumed the technological and economic capacity to

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eliminate poverty, there no longer was reason for economic necessity to be at the center of the political action. The domination of social and economic necessity in the realm of politics especially in the nineteenth century, obscured, in Arendt's opinion, the obligation to preserve a realm of interpersonal freedom, a public realm in which individuals, as Leroy Cooper points out, see their own identity not as private persons, but as free members of a shared world irrespective of particular economic and social status, but beyond the absence of want. If extreme economic optimism, a belief in the primary need for politics in the modern age, and an admiration for virtuosity, performance, and excellence make Arendt an elitist, then perhaps the label is not as significant or damaging as Jay thinks. Certainly, Arendt's admiration for participatory forms of democracy and for workers' councils hardly corresponds to what we normally associate with elitist democratic theory.

How can Arendt's perhaps exaggerated notion of the separate quality and priority of the political realm be explained? A possible explanation comes not from her admiration for the *polis* or her "political existentialism," but in her understanding of the historical career of Jewish identity in the nineteenth century, her grasp of the Jewish question. The evolution of society, of class, of economic distinctions within urbanization and industrialization failed to lead to full integration and the elimination of anti-Semitism. Rather, the increasing importance of race thinking, of class ideologies, rather than formal Enlightenment-inspired political categories, in the nineteenth century exacerbated the position of the Jews. That social history provided the material opportunities and appearances which deluded Jews into false political security. Arendt's perhaps romantic yen for formal political constitutionalism, not uncharacteristic of educated, assimilated German Jewry (a constitutionalism contained, for Arendt, in the American revolution) reflected a disappointment and a perception of a lost historical opportunity to create a world of citizens, of Jews and Gentiles, whose interrelation was based on the shared public legal acceptance of the political equality of citizenship alone, irrespective of social and economic differences. A sense of a lost moment in Germany in the late Enlightenment, before the Romantic reaction to the French Revolution, appears already in Arendt's Varnhagen book. It reappears in Arendt's speech on Lessing. For Arendt, a true politics, a public realm with external freedom and active participation would permit diversity in social and economic life, consistent with political equality and the opportunity to act as a full part of humanity. The sustained status of the Jew as pariah, with its enforced worldlessness, seemed

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capable of change only through political action, not social action, action characteristic of the *polis*, action based on the Enlightenment concept of citizenship and law. Not surprisingly, Arendt's political vision is again part Kantian in its implicit hope for a cosmopolitan world, one transcending nationalism (and clearly therefore, Zionism), where allegiance to the public realm is shared through equal political status by peoples of different races, languages, mores and economics. As a result of her disappointment regarding nineteenth-century social change with respect to Jews, the social plurality of cultures appeared immutable. Therefore, equality and freedom, if they were to affect Jews, could be achieved essentially only in political terms.

The self-deception inherent in European Jewish assimilation demonstrates the consequenses of an inadequate political solution. Rahel Varnhagen's Jewishness was not transcended by wealth, marriage or intellectuality. Likewise, Stefan Zweig's Jewishness was not eradicated by fame, international literary acclaim, wealth, or by his own lack of consciousness. Despite a link between worldlessness and pariah status, and the development of the feelings of compassion and solidarity, the worldless pariah was political testimony to the failure of Jewish integration and the political consequences of the economic and social transformations and ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One final aspect of Jay's interpretation remains: his charge of political existentialism and his related assertion that Arendt, despite appearances, succumbed somehow to fascism and was partially, by association, responsible for fascism. It is, I think, an outrageous and glib claim on several accounts, whether or not one has sympathy or admiration for Arendt's work. First, Jay's identification of Arendt with existentialism is drawn primarily from her 1946 essay on *Existenzphilosophie* whose real purpose was to explicate a movement to an American and English audience, an audience quite unfamiliar with a body of work written in often impenetrable German. She clearly had more sympathy with Jaspers, her teacher. But her own writing does not support Jay's view that, like the existentialists, she admired the self-centered and melodramatic reasons behind political action, mere heroism and glory. Her use of the notion of glory is ancient, not modern. Arendt uses it in the Roman and biblical sense, which endows glory with ethical rather than narrow self-serving qualities.

Likewise, Jay's notion that Arendt somehow succumbed to fascism leads him to compare Rahel Varnhagen to Arendt. Jay claims that Arendt, like Rahel, absorbed the values (i.e. fascist) of her hostile environment. Although Arendt saw Rahel as surrounding herself with

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Gentiles to gain worldly legitimacy, she saw her as failing miserably in her effort to absorb her environment's values. Arendt was interested in Rahel as a poignant and significant self-conscious failure in the attempt to avoid the Jewish question through apparent assimilation and disregard of facts. Jay misreads Arendt's Rahel, and therefore Arendt. The corpus of Arendt's work testifies to her passionate ethical and interior intellectual resistance to fascism or any convenient facile surrounding ideologies.

Arendt, unlike Jay's "latter-day political existentialist," was committed to a means-end continuum through her encounter with Kant. Her commitment to freedom and truth in political action was tempered only by a Lessing-like fear of intolerance in the name of "truth"; a fear that power and the hubris of moral infallibility can lead to disastrous political oppression. Like Augustine and Kierkegaard, Arendt was conscious of the ultimate limitations on human intellect and judgment. To call that "relativism" or "antirationalism," as Jay does, is to seriously misuse those terms. Arendt's concern for human dignity, for freedom, for equality, for excellence in the quality of life—her lifelong commitment to the truth as she saw it—however uncomfortable (as her book on Eichmann indicated)—contradicts Jay's assertion that "the search for truth had no place in the public realm for Hannah Arendt." Faith in political truths and convictions is not in conflict, for Arendt, with dialogue, speech and action among citizens in a free public realm. Arendt possessed a vision of a true humanity, a true politics which could restore our sense of a renewed, shared world.

Finally, Jay sees Arendt as having an "animus" towards "society, history, reason." Yet Arendt's writings, from the very first, were born out of a passion and a use for history, out of her conviction that the intellectual's use of reason and speech and the tradition of thought could lead society and its constituent members towards a political condition in which human potential would flourish. Arendt's writing sought the conquest of the contemporary dangers of spiritual one-dimensionality, of a bureaucratic recasting of ethics, of political oppression, and more ultimately, the threat of physical annihilation through nuclear war.

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STORIES

Felisberto Hernández

THE DAISY DOLLS

I

Next to a garden was a factory and the noise of the machines came through the plants and trees. And deep in the garden was a dark weathered house. The owner of the "black house" was a tall man. At dusk his slow steps came up the street into the garden, where the crunching sound they made on the gravel could be heard over the noise of the machines. One autumn evening, as he opened the front door, squinting in the strong light of the hall, he saw his wife standing halfway up the staircase; and noticing how the steps spread into the middle of the courtyard, it seemed to him she was wearing a great big marble dress, gathered up in the same hand that held onto the balustrade. She realized he was tired, that he was on his way up to the bedroom, and waited for him with a smile. They kissed, and she said:

"Today the boys finished setting up the scenes. . ."

"I know, but don't tell me anything."

She saw him up to the bedroom door, tweaked his nose and left him to himself. He was going to try to sleep a bit before dinner: the dark room would separate the day's worries from the pleasures he expected of the night. He listened fondly, as he had since childhood, to the muffled sound of the machines, and fell asleep. In his dream he saw a lamp shining on a table. Around the table stood several men. One of them wore tails and was saying: "We have to turn the blood around so it'll go out the veins and back the arteries, instead of out the arteries and back the veins." They all clapped and cheered; and then the man who wore tails jumped on a horse in the yard and galloped off, through the cheers, on clattering hooves that drew sparks from the flagstones. Remembering the dream when he woke up, the man of the black house recognized it as an echo of something he'd heard that same day—that the traffic, all over the country, was changing from the left to the right hand—and smiled to himself. Then he put on his tails, once more remembered the man in the dream and went down into the dining

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room. He approached his wife and, running his open hands through her hair, said:

"I always forget to bring a lens to have a good look at the plants in the green of your eyes. But I know you get your skin color rubbing olives in it."

She tweaked his nose again, then poked his cheek, till her finger bent like a spiderleg, and answered:

"And I always forget to bring scissors to trim your eyebrows."

She sat at the table and seeing him leave the room asked:

"Did you forget something?"

"Who knows."

He came right back and she decided he hadn't had time to use the phone.

"Won't you tell me where you went?"

"No."

"And I won't tell you what the men did today."

He'd already started to answer:

"No, my dear olive, don't tell me anything until after dinner."

And he poured himself a glass of French wine.

But his wife's words had been like tiny pebbles dropped into the pond of his reveries; and he couldn't give up the thought of what he expected to see that night. He collected dolls that were a bit taller than real women. He'd had three glass cases built in a large room. In the biggest one were all the dolls waiting to be chosen to compose scenes in the other cases. The arrangements were in the hands of several people: first of all, the caption writers (who had to express the meaning of each scene in a few words). Other artists handled settings, costuming, music, etc. Tonight was the second show. He'd watch while a pianist, seated with his back to him, across the room, played programmed works. Suddenly the owner of the black house remembered he mustn't think of all this during dinner. So he took a pair of opera glasses out of his pocket and tried to focus them on his wife's face.

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"I'd like to know if the shadows under your eyes are also plants."

her eyes shifted from the glass of wine to the tip of the man's sleeve, where a tuft of hair grew, crawling all the way down his hand to his fingers. As he waited on the master of the house, Alex said:

"Walter—" (the pianist) "is here."

After dinner Alex removed the glasses on a tray. They rang against each other, as if happy to meet again. The master, who had fallen into a sleepy silence, was pleasantly stirred at the sound and called out after him:

"Tell Walter to go to the piano. He mustn't talk to me as I come into the room. Is the piano far from the glass cases?"

"Yes, Sir, on the other side of the room."

"Good. Then tell Walter to sit with his back to me, to start on the first piece of the program and keep repeating it without stopping until I flash the light at him."

His wife was smiling at him. He went up to kiss her and for a moment rested his flushed face on her cheek. Then he headed for the little parlor off the big showroom. There he started to smoke and drink his coffee, waiting for the right mood to come over him before he went in to see the dolls. At first he listened vaguely for the noise of the machines and the sounds of the piano, which reached him in low murmurs, as if he were underwater. At moments he started, imagining some of the sounds were hinting at something meant for him alone, as if he were being singled out among several people snoring in a room. But when he tried to concentrate on them, they scattered like frightened mice. He sat there puzzled for a minute, then decided to ignore them. But suddenly he realized he wasn't in his chair anymore: he'd gotten up without noticing it. He remembered having just opened the door, and now he felt his steps taking him toward the first glass case. He switched on the light in the case and through the green curtain he saw a doll stretched out on a bed. He opened the curtain and mounted the podium. It was actually a small rolling platform on rubber casters, with a railing. From there, seated in an armchair at a little table, he had a better view of the scene. The doll was dressed as a bride and her open eyes stared at the ceiling. It was impossible to tell whether she was dead or dreaming. Her arms were spread in an attitude of what could be either despair or blissful abandon. Before opening the drawer of the little table to read the caption, he wanted to imagine something. Maybe she was a bride waiting for the groom, who would never arrive, having jilted her just before the wedding. Or maybe she was a widow remembering her wedding day; or just a girl dressed up to feel like a bride. He opened the drawer and read: "A moment before marrying the man she doesn't love, she locks herself up, in the dress she was to wear to her

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wedding with the man she loved, who is gone forever, and poisons herself. She dies with her eyes open and no one has come yet to shut them." Then the owner of the black house thought: "She was really a lovely bride." And after a moment he was happy to realize he had survived her. Then he opened a glass door and entered the scene to have a closer look. But at the same time, through the noise of the machines and the music, he thought he heard a door slam. He left the case and, caught in the door to the little parlor, he saw a piece of his wife's dress. As he tiptoed over to the door, he thought she must have been spying on him, probably as another joke. He snatched the door open and her body fell on him. He caught it in his arms; but it seemed very light; and he immediately recognized Daisy, the doll who resembled her. Meantime his wife, who was crouching behind an armchair, straightened up and said:

"I also wanted to give you a surprise. I just had time to get her into my dress."

She went on talking, but he didn't listen. Although he was pale, he thanked her for the surprise. He didn't want to discourage her, because he enjoyed the jokes she made up with Daisy. But this time he'd felt uncomfortable. So he handed Daisy back to her, saying he didn't want too long an intermission. Then he returned to the other room, closing the door behind him, and walked toward Walter. But he stopped halfway and opened another door that gave on his study, where he shut himself in, took a notebook from a drawer and proceeded to make a note of the joke his wife had just played on him with Daisy, and the date. First he read the previous note, which said: "July 21. Today, Mary"—his wife's name was Daisy Mary; but she liked to be called Mary; so when he had a doll made to look like her, they decided to use the rusty name Daisy for the doll—"was leaning out the balcony over the garden. I wanted to surprise her, putting my hands over her eyes. But on my way to the balcony I saw it was Daisy. Mary had seen me go to the balcony; she was right behind me, laughing." Although he was the only one to read the notebook, he signed each note with his name, "Horace," in large letters and heavy ink. An earlier note said: "July 18. Today I opened the wardrobe to get my suit and found Daisy hanging there. She was wearing my tails, which looked ridiculously large on her."

Having made a note of the latest surprise, he was back in the showroom, heading for the second glass case. He flashed a light at Walter for him to go on to the next piece on the program and started to roll up the podium. In the pause Walter made before taking up the new piece, he felt the machines pounding harder; and as the podium moved, the casters seemed to rumble like distant thunder.

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The second case showed a doll seated at the head of a table. She held herself upright, her hands on either side of her plate, between the two long rows of silverware. Her posture and the way her hands rested on the silverware made her look as if she were at a keyboard. Horace looked at Walter, saw him bent over the piano, his tails dangling over the edge of the stool, and thought of him as a bird beating black wings. Then he stared at the doll and, as on other occasions, seemed to sense that she was moving. The movements didn't always begin right away; nor did he expect them when the doll was dead or lying down; but this time they started too soon, possibly because of her uncomfortable position. She was trying too hard to look up; nodding slightly, with effort; so that the moment he left her face to gaze at her hands, her head dropped noticeably. He in turn quickly raised his eyes to her face again; but she was already back in her original position. He then began to imagine her story. Her dress and surrounding objects suggested great luxury; but the furniture was coarse and the walls were of stone. On the far wall there was a small window, and behind her a low half-open door, like a false smile. She might be in a dungeon in a castle. The piano made stormy noises and every now and then lightning flashed in the window. Then he remembered that a minute ago the rolling casters had reminded him of distant thunder, and he felt uneasy. Also, before entering the room, he'd been hearing those insinuating sounds. But, returning to the doll's story: maybe she was praying God, at that very moment, to free her. Finally, he opened the drawer and read: "Second scene. This woman is expecting a child soon. She is now living in a lighthouse by the sea. She has withdrawn from the world, which has blamed her for loving a sailor. She keeps thinking: 'I want my child to listen only to himself and the sea.'" He thought: "This doll has found her true story." Then he got up, opened the glass door and slowly went over her things. He felt he was defiling something as solemn as death. He turned to the doll, trying to find a point where their eyes could meet; and after a moment he bent over the unhappy girl, and as he kissed her on the forehead it gave him the same cool, pleasant sensation as Mary's face. He'd hardly taken his lips off her forehead when he saw her move. He was paralyzed. She started to slip to one side, losing her balance, till she fell off the edge of the chair, dragging a spoon and a fork with her. The piano was still making sea noises; and there were still the flashes in the windows and the rumbling machines. He didn't want to pick her up, and hurried out of the case and the room, through the little parlor, into the courtyard. There he saw Alex and said:

"Tell Walter that's enough for today. And have the boys come in tomorrow to fix up the doll in the second case."

At that moment Mary appeared:

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"What's the matter?"

"Nothing: a doll fell—the one in the lighthouse. . ."

"How did it happen? Is she hurt?"

"I must have touched the table when I went in to look around. . ."

"Ah! So you're getting upset!"

"No, I'm very happy with the scenes. But where's Daisy? She certainly looked pretty in your dress!"

"You'd better go to sleep, darling," answered Mary.

But instead they sat on a sofa, where he put his arms around her and asked her to rest her cheek on his for a moment, in silence. As their heads touched, his lit up with memories of the two fallen dolls: Daisy and the girl in the lighthouse. He knew what this meant: the death of Mary. And, afraid his thoughts would pass into her head, he started to kiss her ears.

When he was alone again in the darkness of the bedroom, he concentrated on the noise of the machines and thought of the warning signs he'd been receiving. He was like a garbled wire that kept intercepting hints and calls meant for others. But this time all the signals had been aimed at him. Under the noise of the machines and the sound of the piano he'd detected those other hidden noises, scattering like mice. Then there'd been Daisy falling into his arms when he opened the closet door, as if to say: "Hold me, for Mary is dying." And it was Mary herself who had prepared the warning, as innocently as if she were showing him a disease she wasn't yet aware of. Then, later, there'd been the dead doll in the first case; and, before reaching the second case, the unexpected rumble of the podium, like distant thunder, announcing the sea and the woman in the lighthouse. Then the woman slipping out from under him: like Mary, who would no longer bear a child. And finally Walter, like a dark bird, beating his wings as he pecked away at his black box.

II

Mary wasn't ill and there was no reason to think she was going to die. But for some time now he'd been afraid of losing her and dreading the prospect of life without her. So one day he'd thought of having a doll built to resemble her. At first the idea seemed to have failed. He felt only dislike for Daisy, as for a poor substitute. She was made of kidskin, scented and colored like Mary. Yet when Mary asked him to kiss her, he tasted leather and had the feeling he was about to kiss a shoe. But in time he'd begun to notice a strange relationship develop-

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ing between the two women. One morning he saw Mary singing while she dressed Daisy: she was like a girl playing with a doll. Another time, when he got home in the evening, he found Mary and Daisy seated at a table with a book open in front of them. He had the feeling Mary was teaching a sister to read, and said:

"It must be such a relief to talk to someone who can keep a secret!"

"What do you mean?" said Mary, springing up in anger and leaving the room.

But Daisy went on staring at the book, like a friend maintaining a tactful silence. And that same night, after dinner, to keep him away from her, as they shared their usual sofa, Mary put the doll between them. He glanced at Daisy's face and disliked it again: it was cold and haughty, as if to punish him for slighting her. A bit later, he went into the showroom. At first he strolled back and forth along the glass cases. Then, after a while, he opened the big piano top, removed the stool, replaced it with a chair—so he could lean back—and started to walk his fingers over the cool expanse of black and white keys. He had trouble combining the sounds, like a drunk trying to unscramble his words. But meantime he was remembering many of the things he knew about the dolls. Slowly he'd been getting to know them, almost without realizing it. Until recently, he'd kept the store that had been making his fortune. Alone, after closing hour every day, he liked to wander through the shadowy rooms, looking at the dolls in the show windows. He went over their dresses, with an occasional almost casual glance at their faces. He observed the show windows from an angle, like a director watching his actors in a play. Then he started finding expressions similar to those of his salesgirls in the dolls' faces. Some inspired the same distrust in him; others, the certainty that they were against him. There was one with a snub nose that seemed to say: "Who cares?" Another, which appealed to him, had an enigmatic face: just as she looked good in either a summer or a winter dress, she could also be thinking almost anything, and accepting or rejecting him, according to her mood. In any case, the dolls had their secrets. Although the window decorator knew how to display each of them to her best advantage, at the last moment she always added a touch of her own. It was then that he started to think the dolls were full of portents. Day and night they received countless greedy looks; and those looks formed nests and bred warnings. Sometimes they settled on the dolls' faces like clouds on a landscape, shadowing and blurring their expressions; or lingered and tainted their innocence. Then the dolls were like creatures in a trance, on unknown missions, lending themselves to evil designs. On the night of his quarrel with Mary, he reached the conclusion that

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Daisy was one of those changeable dolls who could receive warnings and transmit messages. Since she lived in the house, Mary had been showing increasing signs of jealousy. Even before, whenever he flirted with a salesgirl, he'd felt her reproach in Daisy's knowing look. That was back in the days when she kept pestering him to give up the store. But now her fits of jealousy at the sight of any other woman had reached the point where they couldn't even spend an evening out together anymore.

On the morning after the quarrel he made up with both of them. His dark thoughts bloomed at night and faded in the daytime. As usual, they went for a walk in the garden. He and Mary carried Daisy between them—in a long skirt, to cover her lifeless legs—as if propping up a sick relative. (the neighbors had cooked up a story about how they'd let a sister of Mary's die, to inherit her money, whereupon, to do penance, they'd taken in a doll who resembled her, as a constant reminder of their crime.)

After a period of happiness, during which Mary prepared surprises for him with Daisy and he hastened to enter them in his notebook, came the night of the second show, with its announcement of Mary's death.

He then hit on the idea of buying his wife a number of strong dresses—to remember her by later on—and made her try them on Daisy. She was delighted and he also pretended to be, when—at a hint from him—she decided to have some of their closest friends to dinner one night. It was storming out, but the guests all sat down gayly to eat; and he, thinking of all the memories the evening was going to leave with him, tried to be the life of the party. First he twirled his knife and fork—like a cowboy with a pair of guns—and aimed them at a girl next to him. She, going along with the joke, raised her arms, and he tickled her plucked armpits with the knife. It was too much for Mary, who burst out:

"Horace, you're being a brat!"

He apologized all around, and soon everyone was having fun again. But when he was serving his French wine, over dessert, she saw a big black stain—the wine he was pouring outside the glass—growing on the tablecloth; and trying to rise, clutching at her throat, she fainted. They carried her into her bedroom; and when she recovered she said she hadn't been feeling well for days. He sent at once for the doctor, who said it was nothing serious but she had to watch her nerves. She got up and saw off her guests as if nothing had happened. But alone with him later on, she said:

"I can't stand this life any more. You were playing with that girl right under my nose."

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"But, Mary. . ."

"And I don't just mean the wine you spilled gaping at her. What about in the yard afterwards, when she said: 'Horace, stop it'?"

"But, darling, all she said was: 'A boring topic.'"

They made up in bed and she fell asleep with her cheek next to his. But, after a while, he turned away to think about her illness. And the next morning, when he touched her arm, it was cold. He lay still, gazing at the ceiling for several grueling minutes before he managed to shout: "Alex!" At that moment the door opened and Mary came in; and he realized it was Daisy he'd touched and that Mary had put her there next to him, while he slept.

After much reflection, he decided to send for his friend Frank, the doll manufacturer, and ask him to find a way to give Daisy some human warmth.

Frank said:

"I'm afraid it's not so easy, old boy. The warmth would last about as long as a hot water bottle."

"All right—fine. Do what you want, just don't tell me. I'd also like her to be softer, nice to touch, not so stiff. . ."

"I don't know about that either. Think of the dent you'd make every time you laid a finger on her."

"Well, anyway, she could be more flexible. And, as for the dent, I don't think that would be such a drawback."

The day Frank took Daisy away, Horace and Mary were sad.

"God knows what they'll do to her," Mary kept saying.

"Now then, darling, one mustn't lose one's sense of reality. After all, she was just a doll."

"Was! You sound as if she were dead. And you're a fine one to talk about sense of reality!"

"I was just trying to comfort you. . ."

"And you think that's the way to do it! She was more mine than yours. I dressed her and told her things I've never told anyone, do you realize that? And she united us more than you can imagine."

He was heading for his study; and she went on, raising her voice:

"Think of all the surprises we prepared for you. Wasn't that enough, without asking for 'human warmth'?"

By then he'd reached the study and slammed the door behind him. The way she'd pronounced "human warmth" not only made him feel ridiculous but soured,all the pleasures he was looking forward to when Daisy returned. He decided to go for a walk.

When he got back, Mary was out; and when she returned, they spent a while hiding the fact that they were unexpectedly glad to see each other.

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That night he didn't go over his dolls. The next morning he was busy. After lunch he and Mary strolled in the garden. They both felt Daisy's absence was temporary and shouldn't be made too much of. He even thought it was easier and more natural to put his arm around Mary. They both felt light and gay, and went out again. But later, at dinnertime, when he went up to the bedroom for her, he was surprised to find her there alone. He'd forgotten for a moment that Daisy was gone, and now her absence made him strangely uneasy. Mary might well be a woman without a doll again; but he could no longer separate the two in his mind, and the fact that the house didn't seem to notice she was missing was like a kind of madness. Also, the way Mary wandered back and forth in the room, apparently not thinking of Daisy, reminded him of a madman drifting around naked, in a daze, forgetting to dress. They went down to dinner. And there, sipping his French wine, he stared at her in silence, till finally he thought he caught a hint of Daisy in her. Then he began to understand what the two women meant to each other. Whenever he thought of Mary, he remembered her fussing over Daisy, arranging her clothes, sitting her up straight so she wouldn't sag and planning to surprise him with her. If Mary didn't play the piano—as, for instance, Frank's girl friend—it was because she expressed herself in her own original way through Daisy. To strip her of Daisy would be like stripping an artist of his art. Daisy wasn't just part of her personality but her most charming side; so that he wondered how he could ever have loved her before Daisy came. Perhaps in those days she'd found other means or ways to express that part of herself. But a while back, when he'd gone up to the bedroom for her and found her alone, she'd seemed strangely insignificant. "Besides," he went on to himself, still sipping his French wine, "Daisy was an unknown obstacle," which probably explained why he kept on tripping over her on his way to Mary.

After dinner he kissed Mary's cool cheek and went in to look at his glass cases. One of them showed a Carnival scene. Two masked dolls, a blonde and a brunette, in Spanish costumes, leaned over a marble balustrade. To the left was a staircase with masks, hoods, paper streamers, and other objects scattered on the steps with artful neglect. The scene was dimly lit; and suddenly, watching the brunette, he thought he recognized Daisy. He wondered whether Mary had sent for her as a surprise. Before going into the matter, he opened the glass door. On his way up the staircase, he stepped on a mask, which he picked up and threw over the balustrade. The gesture gave the objects around him an unpleasantly physical sensation, and he was disap-

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pointed. He moved to the podium, irritated at the way the noise of the machines seemed to clash with the sounds of the piano. But after a few minutes he turned to the dolls again and decided they were probably two women who loved the same man. Then he opened the drawer and read the caption: "The blonde has a boy friend. He discovered, not long ago, that he preferred her friend, the brunette, and declared his love. She was also secretly in love with him, but tried to talk him out of it. He persisted, and on this Carnival night has just told the blonde about her rival. Now the two girls meet for the first time, knowing the truth. They haven't yet spoken as they stand there in a long silence, wearing their disguises." At last he'd guessed one of the captions, he thought; but then wondered whether the coincidence wasn't a portent or warning of something that was already going on between him and the two dolls, and whether he wasn't in love with Daisy. The question—which drew him back into the glass case for a better look—led to others: What was it about Daisy that could have made him fall in love with her? Did the dolls perhaps give him something more than a purely artistic pleasure? Was Daisy really just an eventual substitute for his wife? And for how long would she be happy to play second fiddle to her? It was absolutely necessary for him to reconsider their roles. He didn't want to take these worries up to the bedroom with him; so he called Alex, had him dismiss Walter, then sent him for a bottle of French wine, and sat with it for a while, listening to the noise of the machines. Then he walked up and down the room, smoking. Each time he came to the glass case he drank some wine, and then set out again, thinking: "If there are spirits that haunt empty houses, why wouldn't they also haunt empty dolls?" He thought of those haunted castles, full of spooked objects and furnishings joined in a heavy sleep, under thick wraps, where only ghosts and spirits roam, among whistling bats and marshy sighs. . . . At that moment he was struck by the noise of the machines and he dropped his glass. His hair stood on end, as it dawned on him that if spirits had voices, they were probably the stray sounds of the world, speaking through them, and so maybe the spirit that lived in Daisy spoke the language of the machines. Trying to shake off these thoughts, he felt chills running up his spine. He dropped into an armchair and went on thinking: no wonder such strange things had happened on a recent moonlit night. They were out in the garden, all three of them, and suddenly he started chasing his wife. She ran, laughing, to hide behind Daisy—which, as he realized, wasn't the same as hiding behind a tree—and when he tried to kiss her over Daisy's shoulder, he felt a strong pinprick. Almost at once, he

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heard the machines throbbing, no doubt to warn him against kissing Mary through Daisy. Mary didn't know how she could have left a pin in the doll's dress. And he could have hit himself for being foolish enough to think Daisy was a reflection of Mary, when in fact they reflected each other. . . . Now, coming back to the noise of the machines, he remembered what he'd been suspecting all along: that it had a life of its own, like the sounds of the piano, though they belonged to different families. The noise of the machines was of a noble family, which was perhaps why Daisy had chosen it to express her true love. On that thought he phoned Frank to ask after Daisy. Frank said she was nearly ready, that the girls in the workshop had found a way to. . . Whereupon Horace interrupted him, saying he didn't want to know the details. And, hanging up, he felt a hidden pleasure at the thought of all those workshop girls putting something of themselves into the doll.

The next day, at the lunch table, he found Mary waiting for him with an arm around Daisy's waist. After kissing his wife, he took the doll in his arms, and for a moment her soft warm body gave him the pleasure he'd been hoping for; though when he pressed his lips to hers, she seemed feverish. But he soon got accustomed to this new sensation and began to enjoy himself.

That night, at dinner, he wondered: "Why must the transmigration of souls take place only between people and animals? Aren't there cases of people on their deathbed who've handed their souls over to some beloved object? Besides, it's not just by chance that a spirit comes to dwell in a doll who looks like a beautiful woman. Why not suppose it might have guided the hands of those who built the doll? When someone has a purpose in mind, doesn't he use all the means at his disposal, especially an unexpected helping hand?" Then he thought of Daisy and wondered whose spirit was living in her.

Mary had been in a bad mood since early evening. She'd scolded Daisy while she dressed her because she wouldn't stay still. Now that she was full of water, Daisy was a lot heavier than before, and kept tipping forward. Horace thought of the relations between his wife and the doll, and of the strange shades of enmity he'd noticed between women who were such close friends that they couldn't get along without each other. At the same time, he remembered the same thing often happened between mother and daughter. . . A minute later, he raised his eyes from his plate and said:

"Tell me something, Mary. What was your mother like?"

She jumped at the question: "Why? Do you want to trace my defects to her?"

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"Of course not, darling! I wouldn't think of it!"

He spoke in a soothing voice. So then she said:

"Well, I'll tell you. She was my complete opposite. Calm as a clear day. She could spend hours just sitting in a chair, staring into space."

"Perfect," he said to himself. Though, on the other hand, after pouring himself a glass of wine, he thought: "I can't very well use Daisy to have an affair with the spirit of my mother-in-law."

"And what were her ideas on love?"

"Do you find mine inadequate?"

"Mary, please!"

"She had none, lucky for her. Which was why she was able to marry my father to please my grandparents. He had money. And she made him a fine wife."

Horace, relieved, thought: "Thank God for that. One thing less to worry about."

Though it was spring, the night turned cold. Mary refilled Daisy, dressed her in a silk nightie and took her to bed with them, like a hot water bottle. As sleep came on him, Horace felt himself sinking into a warm pool, where all their legs tangled, like the roots of trees planted so close together there was no way to tell them apart.

III

Horace and Mary were planning a birthday party for Daisy. She was going to be two years old. Horace wanted to present her on a tricycle. He told Mary he'd seen one at a Transportation Day exhibit and was sure he could get it. He didn't tell her the reason for using this particular device was that he remembered seeing a groom elope with his bride on a tricycle in a film years ago. The rehearsals were a success. At first he had trouble getting the tricycle going; but as soon as the big front wheel turned it grew wings.

The party opened with a buffet dinner. Soon the sounds from human throats and necks of bottles mixed in a loud murmur. When it was time to present Daisy, Horace rang a school bell in the courtyard and the guests all went out, holding their glasses. They saw him coming down a long carpeted hallway, struggling with the tricycle, which at first was almost invisible. Of Daisy, who rode behind him, only her flowing white dress showed. He seemed to be floating on a cloud. Daisy's feet were on the axle that joined the small back wheels, her arms thrust forward hugging him, with her hands in his trouser pockets. The tricycle came to a stop in the center of the yard, and in the

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midst of cheers and applause, Horace reached over and stroked her hair. Then he started pedaling hard again, and as the tricycle headed back up the carpeted hallway, gathering speed, everyone watched in breathless silence, as if it were about to take flight. The performance was such a success that he repeated it; and the laughter and applause were beginning again when suddenly, just as he reached the yard, he lost a back wheel. There were cries of alarm, but when he showed he wasn't hurt, there was more laughter and applause. He'd fallen on his back, on top of Daisy, and was kicking his legs in the air like an insect. The guests laughed till they cried. Frank gasped and spluttered:

"Boy, you looked like one of those wind-up toys that goes on walking upside down!"

Then they all went back into the dining room. The men working on the props in the glass cases had surrounded Horace and were asking him to lend them Daisy and the tricycle for a scene. He refused; but he was so happy he invited everybody into the showroom for a glass of French wine.

"If you could tell us what you feel watching the scenes," said one of the boys, "I think we could all learn something."

He started to rock back and forth on his heels, staring at his friends' shoes. Finally he made up his mind and said:

"It's very difficult to put into words, but I'll try. If you promise meantime to ask no more questions and accept anything I care to say."

"Promised!" said one who was a bit hard of hearing, cupping a hand to his ear.

Still, he took his time, clasping and unclasping his hands; and then, to quiet them crossed his arms and began:

"When I look at a scene. . ." Here he stopped, and then took up the speech again, with a digression: "(It's very important to see the dolls through a glass, because that gives them a certain dreamlike quality, like memories. Before, when I could stand mirrors—now I can't any more, but it would take too long to explain why—I liked to see the rooms reflected in them.) So. . . When I look at a scene, it's like catching a woman in the act of remembering an important moment of her life. A bit—if you'll forgive the expression—as if I were opening a crack in her head. Stealing her memory, like a bit of underwear. Then I can use it to guess and invent all sorts of things, even to break into her most intimate thoughts. Sometimes I have the feeling the woman is dead; and then it's like picking a corpse, waiting for something to stir in it. . ." Here again he stopped, not daring to tell them of the strange stirrings he'd seen.

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The boys were also silent, till one of them thought of emptying his glass of wine at a swallow and the others imitated him. Then another said:

"Tell us something more about yourself: your personal tastes, for instance."

"Ah, as for that," said Horace, "I don't think it'll be of any help to you in making up your scenes. For instance, I like to walk on a wooden floor sprinkled with sugar. That little crunching noise. . ."

Just then Mary came in to ask them all out into the garden. It was a dark night and the guests were supposed to form couples and carry torches. Mary took Horace's arm and showed the way. At the door that led into the garden, each guest picked a small torch from a table and lit it at a flaming bowl on another table. The glow attracted the neighbors, who gathered at the low hedge, their faces like shiny fruit with watchful eyes among the trees, glinting with distrust. Suddenly Mary crossed a flower bed, flicked a switch, and Daisy appeared, all lit up in the top branches of a high tree. It was one of Mary's surprises and was met with claps and cheers. Daisy was holding a white fan spread on her breast. A light behind the fan turned it into a bright colored web. Horace kissed Mary and thanked her for the surprise. Then, as the guests scattered, he saw Daisy staring out toward the street he took on his way home every day. He was leading Mary along the hedge when one of the neighbors shouted at others coming up the street: "Hurry! The dead woman's appeared in a tree!" They made it back to the house, where everyone was toasting Daisy. Mary had the twins—her maids, who were sisters—get her down from the tree and change her water for bed.

About an hour had gone by since their return from the garden, when Mary started looking around for Horace and found him back in the showroom with the boys. She was pale and everyone realized something serious had happened. She had the boys excuse Horace and led him up to the bedroom. There he found Daisy with a knife stuck in her chest. The wound was leaking hot water down her dress, which was soaked, and dripping on the floor. She was in her usual chair, with big open eyes. But when they touched her arm, they felt it getting cold.

Horace was holding Mary, who had burst into tears saying:

"Who could have dared to come up here and do such a thing?"

After a while she calmed down and sat in a chair to think over what was to be done. Then she said:

"I'm going to call the police."

"You're out of your mind," he said. "We can't do that to our

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guests, just because one of them. . . And what are you going to tell the police? That someone stuck a knife in a doll and she's leaking? The best is to say nothing. One has to know how to lose with dignity. We'll send her in for repairs and forget about it."

"I can't," said Mary. "I'm going to call a private detective. Don't let anyone touch her: the fingerprints must be on the knife."

He tried to reason with her, reminding her the guests were waiting downstairs. They agreed to lock the doll in, as she was. But the moment Mary left the room, he took out his handkerchief, soaked it in cleaning fluid, and wiped off the handle of the knife.

IV

Horace finally managed to convince Mary to say nothing about the wounded doll. The day Frank came for her, he brought Louise, his girlfriend. She and Mary went into the dining-room, where their voices sounded like a lot of chattering birds being let out of their cages to mix in the air. They were used to talking and listening at the same time.

Meantime Horace and Frank shut themselves in the study. They spoke one at a time, in undertones, as if taking turns at drinking out of a jug.

Horace said: "I was the one who stuck the knife in her, so I'd have an excuse to send her in to you."

And they stood there, bowing their heads in silence.

Mary was curious to know what they were discussing and, deserting Louise for a minute, came to listen at the door. She thought she recognized her husband's voice; but it sounded hoarse and blurred. (At that moment, still mumbling into his chin, Horace was saying: "It may be crazy, but I've heard of sculptors falling in love with their statues.") In a while, Mary came back to listen again, but could only make out the word "possible," pronounced first by her husband, then by Frank. (Actually, Horace had just said: "It must be possible," and Frank had answered: "If it's possible, I'll do it").

One afternoon, a few days later, Mary realized Horace was acting strange. He'd be watching her fondly and then suddenly turn away, looking worried. As he crossed the courtyard at one point, she called him, went out to meet him and putting her arms around his neck said:

"Horace, you can't fool me. I know what's on your mind."

"What?" he said, gaping wildly.

"It's Daisy."

He turned pale.

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"What gave you such an idea?"

He was surprised she didn't laugh at his odd tone.

"Oh, come on, darling. . . After all, she's like a daughter to us by now," Mary went on.

He let his eyes linger on her face, and with them his thoughts; going over each of her features, as if reviewing every detail of a spot he'd visited daily through many long happy years. Then he broke away and went and sat in the little parlor, to think about what had just happened. At first, suspecting his wife had found him out, he'd felt certain she'd forgive him. But then, seeing her smile, he'd realized it was madness to suppose she could imagine, let alone forgive, such a sin. Her face was like a peaceful landscape, with a bit of golden evening glow on one of her cheeks, the other shaded by the small hump of her nose. He'd thought of all the good left in the innocence of the world and the habit of love, and the tenderness with which he always came back to her face after his adventures with the dolls. But in time, when she discovered, not only the true nature of his affection for Daisy, but the length and depth of his deceit, her face would collapse. She'd never be able to understand the sudden evil in the world and in the habit of love, or feel anything but horror at the sight of him.

So he'd stood there in the yard, gazing at a spot of sun on his coat sleeve. As he'd shifted, the spot had moved, like a taint, to her dress. Then, heading for the little parlor, he'd felt his insides lump and sag, like dead weights. Now he sat on a little stool, thinking he was unworthy of being received into the lap of a family armchair, and felt as uncomfortable as if he'd sat on a child. He hardly recognized himself and shuddered at the thought of being made of such base metal. But, to his surprise, a bit later, in bed with the covers pulled up to his nose, he went straight to sleep.

Mary was on the phone to Frank, saying:

"You'd better hurry with Daisy. Horace is worrying himself sick."

Frank said:

"I have to tell you, Mary: it's a bad wound, right in the middle of the circulatory system. We can't rush it. But I'll do what I can."

In a while, Horace woke up under his pile of covers, blinking down a kind of slope, and saw a picture of his parents on the far wall. He felt they'd cheated him: he was like a trunk full of dirty rags instead of riches; and they were like two thieves who'd fled before he grew up and exposed the fraud. But then he was ashamed of these monstrous thoughts.

At dinner, he tried to be on his best behavior.

Mary said: "I called Frank about hurrying Daisy."

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If only she'd known the madness and betrayal she was contributing to by hastening his pleasure! he thought, blindly casting about, right and left, like a frightened horse.

"Looking for something?" asked Mary.

"No, here it is," he said, reaching for the mustard.

She decided if he hadn't seen it standing there right in front of him he must not be well.

Afterwards he got up and slowly bent over her, till his lips grazed her cheek. The kiss seemed to have dropped by parachute, on a plain not yet touched by grief.

That night, in the first glass case, there was a doll seated on a lawn, surrounded by huge sponges, which she seemed to think were flowers. He didn't feel like guessing her fate so he opened the drawer with the captions and read: "This woman is sick in the head; no one knows why she loves sponges." "As if I didn't pay them to find out," he thought; then, bitterly: "They must be to wipe away her guilt."

The next morning he woke up rolled into a ball and couldn't help remembering who he was now. He imagined himself signing a bad check, under a false name. His body was sad, as it had been once before, when a doctor told him he had thin blood and a small heart. But that other time he'd gotten over the sadness. Now he stretched his legs and thought: "Formerly, when I was young, my skin was a lot thicker: I didn't care so much about hurting others. Am I getting weak with age? Or is it a late flowering of shame and guilt?" He got up feeling much relieved; but he knew the dark clouds were still around somewhere, not far away, and that they'd be back with night.

V

A few days later, wanting to distract Horace, Mary took him for a walk. Along the way, she kept wondering whether he was missing Daisy or the real daughter they'd never have any more.

The afternoon Daisy got back, he didn't seem particularly glad to see her, and again Mary thought she wasn't the reason for his sadness. But, a moment before dinner, she caught him lingering over her fondly, and felt relieved.

After that, for several nights, as he kissed his wife before going in to see the dolls, he searched her face with sharp eyes, as if to make sure there was nothing strange hidden there. He hadn't yet been alone with Daisy.

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And then came a memorable afternoon when, in spite of the mild weather, Mary filled Daisy with hot water, packed him into bed with her for his nap, and went out.

That evening he kept scanning her face as if watching for an enemy. She noticed his quick, nervous gestures, his stilted walk. He was waiting for the sign that he'd been found out.

Finally, one morning, it happened.

Once, some time ago, when Mary had been complaining of Alex's beard, Horace had said: "Better than those twin maids of yours that you can't tell apart!"

She'd answered: "Why, do you have anything special to say to either one of them? Have you gotten them mixed up in some way?"

"Yes, I was calling you once, and who do you think came in? The one that just happens to carry your name."

After which the twins had been ordered to stay out of sight when he was home. But seeing one vanish through a door once at his approach, he'd chased her, thinking she was a stranger, and run into his wife. Since then Mary had them come in only a few hours in the morning and never took her eye off them.

The day he was found out, Mary had caught the twins raising Daisy's nightie when it wasn't time to dress her or changer her water. As they left the bedroom, she went in. In a little while the twins saw her rush across the courtyard into the kitchen, and back again, with the big chopping knife. They were frightened and tried to follow her; but she slammed the door on them. When they peeped through the keyhole her back blocked their view; so they moved to another door. She had Daisy spread on a table, as for an operation, and was stabbing her all over, flailing away as the water splashed in her face. Two small spurts rose from one of Daisy's shoulders, mixing in the air, like the water from the fountain in the garden; and there was a gush from her belly, stirring under her torn nightgown. One of the twins had knelt on a cushion, with a hand over one eye, the other eye stuck to the keyhole. When the draft that came through the hole made her eye run, she changed places with her sister. Mary was also crying as she finally dropped the knife on Daisy and fell into an armchair, burying her face in her hands. The twins lost interest in the scene and returned to the kitchen. But soon she called them back up to help her pack. She'd decided to handle the situation with the wounded dignity of a fallen queen. Determined to punish Horace, she instructed the twins to say she would not receive him, in case he showed up before she was ready. She started making arrangements for a long trip, and gave the twins

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some of her dresses. Finally, she drove off, leaving the twins wailing in the garden. But, back in the house with their new dresses, they cheered up. They drew open the curtains that covered the mirrors—to spare Horace the shock of seeing himself in them—and held the dresses up to their bodies for effect. One of them saw Daisy's mangled form in a mirror and said: "What a beast!" She meant Horace, who had just appeared in a door, wondering how to ask them to explain the dresses and the bare mirrors. But, suddenly catching sight of Daisy sprawled on the table in her ripped nightie, he changed course. The twins tried to sneak out of the room; but he stopped them: "Where's my wife?"

The one who had said "What a beast!" stared him full in the face and answered:

"She's on a long trip. She gaved us these dresses."

He dismissed them and stood there thinking: "The worst is over." Then he glanced at Daisy again. The chopping knife still lay across her belly. He wasn't too unhappy, and for a moment even imagined having her repaired. But then he pictured her all stitched up and remembered a rag horse he'd had as a child, with a tear in it. His mother had wanted to patch it up; but he'd lost his taste for it and thrown it out.

As for Mary, he was convinced she would return. He kept telling himself: "I have to take things calmly." And in fact, he felt bolder than he had for years. Looking back over the morning's events, he already saw himself betraying Daisy. A few days ago Frank had shown him another doll: a ravishing blonde with a shady past. Frank had been spreading word of a manufacturer in a northern country who made these dolls. He'd imported the designs, and the first samples had been a great success. Soon an elderly shy man had visited him, with big pouchy eyes gleaming under heavy lids, to ask for details. Frank had shown him photographs of the dolls, saying: "Their generic name is Daisy; but then each owner gives them whatever pet name he wants. These are the samples that came with the designs." He'd displayed only three photographs, and the man had picked one, almost at random, and asked the price, cash in hand. Frank had quoted a stiff sum and the buyer had blinked a couple of times; but then he'd signed the order, with a pen shaped like a submarine. Horace had seen the finished blonde and asked Frank to hold her for him; and Frank, who had others on the way, had agreed. At first Horace had thought of setting her up in an apartment; but now he decided to bring her home and keep her in the glass case where he kept the dolls waiting to be assigned their roles. As soon as the servants retired, he'd bring her up to the bedroom; and before they rose in the morning, he'd put her back in the glass case. Meantime, he hoped Mary wouldn't turn up in the middle of

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the night. Since Frank had put the doll at his disposal, he'd felt himself riding a lucky streak he hadn't known since youth. His having missed Mary's departure was a good sign; so was his youthful sense of being in control. If it was that easy to give up one doll for another, it was no use wasting tears on a corpse. Mary was sure to be back, now that he no longer cared about her; so he'd leave the corpse to her.

Suddenly Horace started to edge along the wall like a thief. Sidling up to a wardrobe, he drew the curtain across the mirror. He repeated the gesture at the other wardrobe. He'd had the curtains hung years ago. Mary was always careful to shield him from the mirrors: she dressed behind closed doors and made sure the curtains were back in place before leaving the room. Now he was annoyed to think the twins had not only been wearing her clothes but had left the mirrors uncovered. It wasn't that he didn't like to see things in mirrors; but his sallow face reminded him of some wax dolls he'd seen in a museum one afternoon. A shopkeeper had been murdered that day, like many of the figures represented in the dolls, and the splotches of blood on the wax were as repulsive to him as if he'd actually caught the murderer at work with his knife. The only uncovered mirror in the room was the one on the dresser. It was a low mirror where he could bend for a quick glimpse at the knot of his tie, as he went by every day. Since he combed and shaved by touch, it had never seen his face; so that now, feeling safe, he passed it as usual, but with the same unpleasant feeling he would have had at the sight of his face, as suddenly it pictured his hand against his dark suit. He realized then his hands were also the color of wax. At the same time, he remembered some loose arms he'd seen in Frank's office that morning. They were pleasantly colored and shaped like those of the blond doll; and, like a child asking a carpenter for scraps, he'd told Frank: "I could use some of those arms and legs, if you have any left over."

Frank couldn't imagine what for; so he'd explained: "I'd like the boys to make up some scenes with loose arms and legs. For instance, an arm hanging from a mirror, a leg sticking out from under a bed and so on."

Frank, bent over his work, had watched him askance.

At lunch that day, Horace drank his wine as calmly as if Mary were out spending the day with relatives. He kept thinking of his good luck. He got up feeling elated, sat at the piano for a while, letting his fingers roam, and finally went up for his nap. On his way past the dresser, he thought: "One of these days I'll get over my fear and face the mirrors." He was already looking forward to the surprises he'd find in their jumbled images. Then, with another glance at Daisy, who would have

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to wait until Mary got back, he went to bed. As he stretched out under the covers, he touched a strange object with the tip of his foot and jumped up. For a moment he stood there, then pulled back the covers. It was a note from Mary that said: "Horace: here's your mistress. I've also stabbed her. But I can admit it—not like a certain hypocrite I know who just wanted to send her in to have filthy things done to her. You've sickened my life and I'll thank you not to look for me. Mary."

He went back to bed, but couldn't sleep and got up again. He avoided her things on the dresser as he avoided her face when they were quarreling. Then he went to the movies. There he shook hands with an old enemy, without realizing it. He kept thinking of Mary.

When he got back, there was still a bit of sun filtering into the bedroom. As he went by one of the covered mirrors, he saw his face in it, through the wispy curtain, catching the sun, which made it look bright as a ghost. With a shudder, he closed the windows and lay down. If his luck was coming back, after all these years, it wouldn't be for long; nor would it come alone, but wrapped in strange circumstances, as the ones he'd been coping with because of Daisy, who still lay there, a few feet away. At least her body wouldn't rot, he thought, wondering at how little it had to do with the spirit that had once inhabited it. And so, mightn't that spirit have deliberately provoked Mary's wrath, so there would be a corpse between them, Horace and Mary? He couldn't sleep, watching the ghostly shapes of the room, which seemed to echo the noise of the machines. He got up, went to the table and drank some wine. As the evening wore on he became more and more aware of Mary's absence. He missed their kiss after dinner. Alone with his coffee in the little parlor, he decided he ought to avoid the house while she was gone; and when he went out for a walk a bit later, he looked for a student hotel he remembered seeing in the neighborhood. A palm grew in the doorway and a row of glinting mirrors led all the way up the stairs; so he walked on. The sight of so many mirrors in a single day was a dangerous sign. But then he remembered what he'd told Frank early that morning about wanting to see an arm hanging from a mirror. He also remembered the blonde doll, and his new boldness, and turned back. He brushed past the palm and tried to climb the stairs without looking at himself in the mirrors. It was a long time since he'd seen so many at once and the confusion of images made his head spin. He even thought there might be someone hidden among the reflections. The lady who ran the place met him upstairs and showed him the free rooms, which all had great big mirrors. He chose the best and said he'd be back in an hour. At home, he packed a small suitcase; and on his way back to the hotel he remembered it had once been a brothel:

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which explained the mirrors. There were three in his room, which looked its best in the largest one, by the bed. So that was the one he watched, wondering for how many long years it had been reflecting the same vaguely Chinese sceneries. The gaudy red wallpaper was faded by now, but, according to the mirror, still showed traces of what looked like yellowish bridges with cherry trees sunk in the bottom of a lake. He got into bed and put out the light, but went on seeing things in the glow that came in from the street. He had the feeling he'd been taken into the bosom of a poor family, where all things were friends and had aged together. But the windows were still young and looked out; they were twins, like Mary's maids, and dressed alike, in clinging lace curtains and velvet drapes gathered at the edges. It all gave him a strangely borrowed sense of wellbeing, as if he were in someone else's body. The loud silence made his ears hum and he realized he was missing the noise of the machines and that he was glad he'd left it behind in the black house. If only he had Mary at his side now, he'd be completely happy. As soon as she came back he'd have her spend a night with him in the hotel. But then he dozed off thinking of the blonde doll, and dreamed of a white arm floating around in a sort of dark haze. A sound of steps in a neighboring room woke him up. He got out of bed, on bare feet, and paced the rug, but saw a white spot following him, and recognized his face, reflected in the mirror over the fireplace. He wondered why someone didn't invent a mirror that showed objects but not people; though of course that was absurd; not to mention the fact that a man without an image in the mirror would have to be dead. He lay down again, just as someone turned on a light across the street. The light fell on the mirror by the bed; and he thought of his childhood, and other mirrors he'd known, and fell asleep.

VI

Horace now slept in the hotel; and the same pattern of events repeated itself every night: windows went on across the street and the light fell on his mirrors; or he woke up and found the windows asleep.

One night he heard cries and saw flames in his mirror. At first he watched them as if they were flickers on a screen; but then he realized if they showed in the mirror they must be somewhere, and springing up he saw them dancing in one of the rooms across the street, like tiny devils in a puppet show. He jumped out of bed, threw on his robe and put his face to a window. The flashes in the glass made the window seem as frightened as he was. There was a crowd down below—he was

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up on the second floor—and the firemen were coming. Just then, he saw Mary leaning out another window of the hotel. She'd already noticed him and was staring at him in surprise. He waved, shut the window and went up the hall to knock on what he thought was her door. She came right out saying:

"You're wasting your time following me."

And she slammed the door in his face.

He stayed there quietly, till he heard her sobbing inside. Then he said:

"I wasn't following you. But since we've met, why don't we go home?"

"You go on if you want," she said.

He thought he sensed doubt in her voice; and the next day he moved back happily into the black house. There he basked in luxury, wandering like a sleepwalker among his riches. The familiar objects all seemed full of peaceful memories, the high ceilings braced against death, if it struck from above.

But when he went into the showroom after dinner that evening, the piano reminded him of a big coffin, the resonant silence of a wake. He raised the top of the piano and, suddenly terrified, let it fall with a bang. For a moment he stood there with his arms up, as if someone were pointing a gun at him, but then rushed out into the courtyard shouting: "Who put Daisy in the piano?"

As his shouts echoed, he went on seeing her hair tangled in the strings, her face flattened by the weight of the lid. One of the twins answered his call, speechless. Finally Alex appeared and said: "The lady was in this afternoon. She came to get some clothes."

"These surprises of hers are going to be the death of me," Horace shouted, losing control. But suddenly he pulled himself together: "Take Daisy to your room and have Frank come for her early tomorrow morning. Wait—" he shouted again. "Come here." And as the twins left—lowering his voice to a whisper: "Tell Frank to bring the other doll when he comes for her."

That night he slept in another hotel. He got a room with a single mirror. The yellow wallpaper had red flowers and green leaves woven in a pattern that suggested a trellis. The bedspread was also yellow and irritated him: he had the feeling he was sleeping outdoors.

The next morning he went home and had some large mirrors brought into the showroom to multiply the scenes in the glass cases. The day passed with no word from Frank. That evening, as he came into the showroom with the wine, Alex dropped the bottle. . .

"So, what's all the fuss about?" said Horace.

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He was wearing a black silk mask and yellow gloves.

"I thought you were a thief," said Alex, as Horace's laugh blew billows in the mask.

"I can't breathe or drink with this thing on. But before I remove it I want you to take down the mirrors and lean them on chairs—like this," said Horace, taking one down and showing him.

"They'd be safer if you turned the glass to the wall," objected Alex.

"No, because I still want them to reflect things."

"You could lean their backs on the wall then."

"No, because then they'd be at the wrong angle and show my face."

When Alex had done as he was told, Horace removed his mask and began to sip his wine, pacing up and down a carpet in the middle of the room. The way the mirrors tipped forward, toward him, leaning on the chairs that separated them from him, made him think of them as bowing servants watching him from under raised brows. They also reflected the floor crookedly through the legs of the chairs. After a couple of drinks, he was bothered by this effect and decided to go to bed.

The next morning—he'd slept at home that night—the chauffeur came, on Mary's behalf, to ask for money. He gave it to him without asking where she was, but assumed it meant she wouldn't be back soon. So, when the blonde doll arrived, he had her taken straight up to the bedroom. At dinnertime, he had the twins dress her in an evening gown and lead her to the table. He ate with her sitting across from him; and afterwards, in front of one of the twins, asked Alex: "What do you think of this one?"

"A beauty, sir—very much like a spy I met during the war."

"A lovely thought, Alex."

The next day he told the twins:

"From now on you're to call her Miss Eulalie."

At dinnertime, he asked the twins (who no longer hid from him): "Can you tell me who's in the dining room?"

"Miss Eulalie," both the twins said at once.

But out of earshot, making fun of Alex, they said:

"It's time to give the spy her hot water. . ."

VII

Mary was waiting for him in the student hotel, hoping he'd return there. She went out only long enough for her room to be made. She

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carried her head high around the neighborhood, but walked in a cloud, thinking: "I'm a woman who has lost her man to a doll. But if he could see me now he'd be drawn to me." Back in her room, she opened a book of poems, bound in blue oilcloth, and started to read out loud, in an absent voice, waiting again. When he didn't show up, she tried to see into the poems, as if someone had just left a door open by chance for her to peep in. Then, for a moment, it seemed to her the wallpaper, the folding screen, even the bright taps of the washbowl also understood the poems, swept up in their lofty rhythms and noble images. Often, in the middle of the night, she switched on her lamp and chose a poem as if she were choosing a dream. Out walking again the next day, she imagined her steps were poetry. And one morning she decided: "I'd like Horace to think of me walking alone among trees, with a book in my hand."

She she packed again, sent for her chauffeur and had him drive her out to a place belonging to a cousin of her mother's: it was a tree-lined suburb. The cousin was an old spinster who lived in an ancient house. When her huge bulk came heaving through the dim rooms, making the floor creak, a parrot squawked: "Hello, milksops." Mary poured her heart out to her without a sniffle. The fat cousin was horrified, then indignant, and finally in tears. But Mary calmly dispatched the chauffeur to get money from Horace. In case Horace asked after her, he was to say, as if on his own, that she was walking among the trees with a book in her hand. If he wanted to know where she was, he should tell him. Finally, he was to report back at the same time the next day. Then she went and sat under a tree with her book, and the poems started to float and spread through the garden as if filling in the shapes of trees and clouds.

At lunch the fat cousin brooded; but then she asked: "What are you going to do with the pig?"

"Wait for him and forgive him."

"Not at all like you, my dear. This man has turned your head and you're still dancing to his tune like one of his dolls."

Mary lowered her eyes in blissful silence. But later that afternoon, the cleaning woman came in with the previous day's evening paper, and Mary noticed a headline that said: "Frank's Daisy Dolls." She couldn't help reading the leaflet announcing "a fancy display on the top floor of our smartest department store. We understand some of the dolls wearing the latest fashions will be Daisies. And that Frank, the famous doll manufacturer, will at the same time be joining the firm that runs the store. More evidence of the alarming rate at which this new version of original sin—to which we have already referred in

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previous editions—is spreading among us. Here is a sample of a flier left at one of our main clubs: Are you ugly? Don't worry. Shy? Forget it. No more quarrels, back talk, gossipy relatives. A Daisy Doll for all, offering her silent love."

Mary was shaking all over:

"The nerve—to think he can use the name of our. . .!"

Still grasping for words, she raised flashing eyes, aimed them in fury, and shouted:

"Look at this!"

The fat cousin, seated nearby, blinked and rummaged in her sewing basket, looking for her glasses. Mary said:

"Listen to this." And she read out the leaflet. "I'm not just going to divorce him, but kick up the biggest row this country has ever seen."

"Now you're talking sense!" shouted the fat cousin, taking her hands—which were raw from scrubbing pans—back out of the basket. And, at the first chance she had, while Mary strode frantically up and down, tripping over innocent plants and flowerpots, she hid the book of poems from her.

The next day the chauffeur came in wondering how to evade Mary's questions about Horace; but she only asked him for the money and then sent him back to the black house to fetch Mary, the twin. Mary—the twin—arrived in the afternoon and told her all about the spy and how they all had to call her Miss Eulalie. At first Mary—Horace's wife—was terrified, and asked faintly:

"Does she look like me?"

"No, Madam—she's blonde and dresses differently."

Mary—Horace's wife—jumped up, but then dropped back into her armchair, crying at the top of her voice. The fat cousin appeared and the twin repeated the story. The fat cousin's heaving breast shook as she burst into loud moans; and the parrot joined the racket screeching: "Hello, milksops."

VIII

Walter was back from a holiday and Horace was having his nightly showings again. The first night, he'd taken Eulalie into the showroom with him, sat her next to him on the podium and kept his arms around her while he watched the other dolls. The boys had made up scenes with more "personalities" than usual. There were five in the first glass case, representing the board of directors of a society for the protection of unwed mothers. One of them had just been elected

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President of the board; another, her beaten rival, was moping over her defeat. He liked the rival and left Eulalie for a moment to go plant a kiss on her cool forehead. When he got back to the podium he thought he heard the noise of the machines filtering through gaps in the music and recalled Eulalie's resemblance to a spy. In any case, his eyes feasted greedily on the various dolls that night. But the next day he woke up exhausted and toward evening he had dark thoughts of death. He dreaded not knowing when he would die, or what part of his body would go first. It was harder for him every day to be alone. The dolls were no company, but seemed to say: "Don't count on us—we're just dolls." Sometimes he whistled, but soon felt the thread of sound thinning out till he lost track of it. Other times, he talked to himself aloud, stupidly commenting on what he was doing: "Now I'm going to the study for the inkwell." Or he described his actions as if he were watching someone else: "The poor idiot—there he is, opening a drawer; uncovering the inkwell. For all the good it does him." Finally, frightened, he went out.

The next day he received a box from Frank. He had it pried open: it was full of loose arms and legs. He remembered his request and hoped the box didn't include any loose heads. Then he had it carried in to the glass case where he kept the dolls waiting to be assigned their roles. He called the boys on the phone to explain how he wanted the arms and legs to take part in the scenes. But the first trial was a disaster and angered him. The moment he drew the curtain, he saw a doll dressed in mourning, seated at the foot of what looked like some church steps. She was staring straight ahead, with an incredible number of legs—at least ten or twelve—sticking out from under her skirt. On each step above her was an arm with the hand turned up. "Clumsy fools—couldn't think of anything better than to use all the arms and legs at once," he thought; and without trying to figure out the meaning of the scene, he opened the drawer with the captions and read: "This is a poor widow who spends her time wandering around looking for something to eat. The hands are like traps snapping up alms." "What silly nonsense," he kept thinking. He went up to bed in a bad mood; and on the point of falling asleep, he saw the widow walking with all her legs, like a spider.

After this failure Horace felt very disappointed in the boys, the dolls and even Eulalie. But, a few days later, Frank took him out for a drive. Suddenly, going up the highway, Frank said:

"See that little two-storey house by the river? That's where that old guy lives—the shy little man who has your blonde's sister: your—uh—sister-in-law. . ." He slapped Horace on the leg and they both laughed. "He comes only at night. Afraid his mother will find out."

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The next morning, toward noon, Horace returned alone, to walk down the dirt road that led to the house by the river. He came to a closed gate, next to which there was another even smaller house probably belonging to the forester. He clapped and an unshaven man in a torn hat came out chewing.

"Looking for someone?"

"I've been told the owner of that house over there has a doll. . ."

The man—now leaning back on a tree—broke in to say:

"The owner is out."

Horace drew several bills from his wallet; and the man, eyeing the money, began to chew more slowly. Horace stood there thoughtfully rippling the bills, as if they were playing cards. The man swallowed and watched. When he seemed to have had enough time to imagine everything he could do with the money, Horace said:

"I might just want to have a look at that doll."

"The boss comes at seven."

"Is the house open?"

"No, but I have a key. In case anyone finds out," said the man, reaching for *the loot*, "I don't know anything." He pocketed the money, taking out a big key: "Give it a couple of turns. . . The doll is upstairs. . . And make sure you leave everything *jest* as you find it."

Horace strode down the road, once again full of youthful excitement. The small front door was as dirty as an old hag and the key seemed to squirm in the lock. He went into a dingy room with fishing poles leaning against the walls. He picked his way through the filth and on up a recently varnished staircase. The bedroom was comfortable; but there was no doll. He looked everywhere, even under the bed; and at last he found her in a wardrobe. At first it was like running into one of Mary's surprises. The doll was in a black evening gown dotted with tiny stones like drops of glass. If she'd been in one of his show cases he would have thought of her as a widow sprinkled with tears. Suddenly he heard a blast, like a gunshot. He ran to look over the top of the stairs and saw a fishing pole lying on the floor below, in a small cloud of dust. Then he decided to wrap the doll in a blanket and carry her down to the river. She was light and cold; and while he looked for a hidden spot under the trees he caught a scent that didn't seem to come from the forest, and traced it to her. He found a soft spot on the grass, spread out the blanket, holding her over his shoulder, and laid her down as gently as if she'd fainted in his arms. In spite of the seclusion, he wasn't at ease. A frog jumped and landed nearby; and as it sat there panting, he wondered which way it was going to jump next. In a moment, he drove it off with a stone. But still, to his disappointment, he couldn't concentrate properly on the doll. He didn't dare look her in

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the face, for fear of her lifeless scorn. Instead he heard a strange murmur mixed with the sound of water; and turning toward the river, he saw a boy in a boat, rowing up with horrible grimaces. He had a big bloated head and tiny hands and seemed to move only his mouth, which was like a piece of raw flesh, hideously twisted into its strange sound. Horace grabbed the doll and ran for the house.

Later, on his way home, he thought of moving to some other country and never looking at another doll. When he arrived, he went straight up to the bedroom to throw out Eulalie; but he found Mary sprawled face down on the bed, crying. He went up and stroked her hair, but realized the doll was on the bed with them and called in one of the twins, with orders to remove her and have Frank come and take her away. He stretched out next to Mary and they both lay there in silence waiting for night to fall. And then, taking her hand and searching painfully for words, as if struggling with a foreign language, he told her of his disappointment in the dolls and the emptiness he'd felt in his life without her.

IX

Mary thought Horace's disappointment in the dolls was final, and for a while they both acted as if happier times were back. The first few days, neither of them mentioned Daisy; but then they began to fall into unexpected silences, and each of them knew whom the other was thinking about. One morning, strolling in the garden, Mary stopped in front of the tree where she'd put Daisy to surprise Horace. There, remembering the story the neighbors had made up and the fact that she'd actually killed Daisy, she burst into tears. When Horace came out to ask her what was wrong, she met him with an angry glare. He realized she'd lost much of her appeal, standing there alone with folded arms, without Daisy. Then, one evening, he was sitting in the little parlor, blaming himself for Daisy's absence, brooding over his guilt, when suddenly he noticed a black cat in the room. He got up, annoyed, intending to scold Alex for letting it in, when Mary appeared saying she had brought it. She was in such a gay mood, hugging him, as she told him about it, that he didn't want to upset her; but he hated it for the stealthy way it had crept up on him in his guilt. And soon it, too, came between them, as she got into the habit of taking it up to bed with her, making it lie on the covers. He waited for her to fall asleep, then started an earthquake under the covers till he got rid of it. One night she woke up in the middle of the earthquake:

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"Was it you shaking the bed?"

"I don't know."

She grumbled and defended the cat. Till one night, after dinner, he went into the show room to play the piano. For some days now he'd done without the scenes in the glass cases and, against his habit, left the dolls in the dark, alone except for the noise of the machines. He lit a lamp by the piano, and there was the cat, a dark shape on the lid, watching him with bright eyes. Startled, he chased it off, then went after it, as it jumped and ran into the little parlor. There, clawing to get out, it ripped a curtain off the closed door that led into the yard. Mary was watching from the dining room. She rushed in with strong words, ending with:

"You made me kill Daisy and now I suppose you want me to kill the cat."

He put on his hat and went out for a walk. He was thinking she had no right to treat him that way any more since they'd made up. At one point, he remembered, she'd not only forgiven him his madness but actually said she loved him for it. In any case, seeing her lose her appeal without Daisy was already punishment enough. The cat cheapened her, instead of adding to her charm. Seeing her tears, on his way out, he thought: "So, it's her cat and her guilt." But at the same time he had the uneasy feeling that her guilt was nothing compared to his, and that if she couldn't quite live up to his expectations it was because of the weight she was carrying for him. And so it would always be, even on his deathbed. He imagined her still at his side, on his unpredictable but probably cowardly last days or minutes, sharing his dread. Perhaps—he couldn't think which was worse—he wouldn't even realize she was there.

At the corner he stopped to gather his wits so he could cross without being run over by a car. For a long time he wandered with his thoughts, down dark streets, till suddenly he woke up in a park and went and sat on a bench. There he thought about his life, staring into the trees. Then he followed their long shadows, to a lake, where he stopped to wonder vaguely about his soul, which was like a heavy silence on the dark water: a silence with a memory of its own, in which he seemed to recognize the noise of the machines. Perhaps the noise was the wreckage of a lost boat, full of dolls, sunk in the night. Starting suddenly, he saw a young couple come out from under the trees. As they approached, he remembered kissing Mary for the first time in a fig tree, nearly falling off, after picking the first figs. The couple moved past, a short distance away, crossed a narrow street and went into a small house. He noticed several other small houses, some with rent

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signs; and, though he made up again with Mary when he got home, later that night, when he was alone for a moment in the showroom, he thought of renting one of the small houses with a Daisy Doll.

The next day at breakfast he was struck by the fact that the cat had green bows in its ears. Mary explained people took their newborn kittens to the druggist to have their ears pierced with one of those machines used for punching holes in file paper. He liked the idea and thought it a good sign. From the street, he phoned Frank to ask him how he could distinguish the Daisy Dolls from the others on show at the fancy department store downtown. Frank said at the moment there was only one available, near the cash register, wearing a single earring. The coincidence, he decided, was providential: she was meant for him. And he began to relish the thought of returning to his vice as to a voluptuous fate. He could have taken a tram; but he didn't want to break the mood; so he walked, thinking about how he was going to pick out his doll. Now he was also caught up among other people, pleasantly lost—it was just before Carnival—in the holiday crowd. The store was farther away then he had calculated. He began to feel tired, and anxious to meet the doll. A child aimed a horn at him and blasted it in his face. He started to have horrible misgivings and wondered whether he shouldn't leave the visit for the afternoon. But when he reached the store and saw other dolls dressed up in the show windows he decided to go in. The Daisy Doll was wearing a wine-colored Renaissance dress. A tiny mask added to her proud bearing and he felt like humbling her; but a salesgirl he knew came up with a twisted smile, and that drove him off.

A few days later he'd installed the doll in one of the small houses near the park. Two nights a week, at nine o'clock, Frank sent a secretary over with a cleaning woman. At ten, they filled the doll with hot water and left. He'd asked them to leave her mask on. He was delighted with her and called her Hermione. Once when they were both sitting in front of a picture, he saw her eyes—thoughtful eyes, shining through the mask—reflected in the glass. From then on, they sat in the same place, cheek to cheek. Whenever he thought the eyes in the glass—it was a picture of a waterfall—took on an expression of humbled pride, he kissed her passionately. Sometimes he crossed the park with her—he seemed to be walking a ghost—and they sat on a bench near a fountain. But suddenly he realized her water was getting cold and hurried her back into the house.

Not long after that there was a big fashion show in the fancy department store. A huge glass case filled the whole of the top floor: it was in the middle of the room, leaving just enough space on all four

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sides for people to circulate. Because people came not only for the fashions but also to pick out the Daisy Dolls, the show was a great success. The showcase was divided into two sections by a mirror that reached all the way to the ceiling. In the section facing the entrance, the scene—arranged and interpreted by Horace's boys—represented an old folk tale, "The Woman of the Lake." A young woman lived in the depths of a forest, near a lake. Every morning she left her tent and went down to the lake to comb her hair. She had a mirror which some said she held behind her, facing the water, in order to see the back of her head. One morning after a late party, some high society ladies decided to pay the lonely woman a visit. They were to arrive at dawn, ask her why she lived alone and offer their help. When they reached her, the woman of the lake was combing her hair. She saw their elegant dresses through her hair and curtsied humbly at their approach. But at their first question she straightened up and set out along the edge of the lake. The ladies, thinking she was going to show them some secret, followed her. But the lonely woman only went round and round the lake, followed by the ladies, without saying or showing them anything. So the ladies left in disgust, calling her "the mad woman of the lake." And since then, in that part of the country, a person lost in silent thought is said to be "going round the lake."

In the showcase, the woman of the lake appeared seated at a dressing table on the edge of the water. She wore a flimsy white robe embroidered with yellow leaves. On the dressing table were a number of vials of perfume and other objects. It was the moment in the story when the ladies arrived in their party dresses. All sorts of faces peered in at them, along the glass case, looking them up and down, and not only for their dresses. Glinting eyes jumped suspiciously, from a skirt to a neckline, from one doll to the next, distrusting even the virtuous ones, like the woman of the lake. Other wary eyes glanced off the dresses as if afraid to come into contact with the dolls' skins. A young girl bowed her head in Cinderella-like wonder at the worldly splendors she imagined went with the beautiful dresses. A man frowned and lowered his eyes before his wife, hiding his urge to own a Daisy Doll. The dolls, in general, didn't seem to care whether they were being dressed or undressed. They were like haughty tarts oblivious to everything but their "poses."

The other section of the showcase was divided into two parts: a beach and a forest. The dolls on the beach wore bathing suits. Horace had stopped to watch two in a "talking" pose: one with a series of concentric circles, like a target (the circles were red), drawn on her belly, the other with fish painted on her shoulderblades. With his small

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head (another doll head) bobbing among the spectators, he moved on, to the forest. The dolls there were natives and almost naked. Instead of hair, some grew plants with tiny leaves on their dark heads, vines that trailed down their backs; they had flowers or stripes on their dark skins, like cannibals. Others were painted all over with bright human eyes. He took an immediate liking to a negress, who looked normal, except for a couple of little black faces with button lips painted on her breasts. He went on touring the show until he ran into Frank and asked him:

"Which of the dolls in the forest are Daisies?"

"Why, in that section they're all Daisies."

"I want you to send me the negress—out to the house by the park."

"It'll take at least a week, old boy. . ."

But, in fact, twenty days went by before he had her in the house. She was in bed, waiting for him, with the covers drawn up to her chin.

Now he didn't find her so interesting any more; and when he pulled back the covers she let out a wild cackle in his face. It was Mary, laughing at him, in bitter spite, explaining how she'd learned of his new deceit. It turned out his cleaning woman also worked for "Milksops." He listened absently, as if distracted. She noticed his strange calm and stopped for a moment. But then, hiding her amazement, she went on:

"So now what do you have to say for yourself?"

He went on staring blankly, as a man sunk into a stupor, after an exhaustion of years. Then he started to turn on his heels, with a little shuffle. Mary said: "Wait," and got up to wash off the black paint in the bathroom. She was frightened and had started to cry and sneeze at the same time. When she got back, he was gone. But she found him at home, locked in a guest room, refusing to talk to anyone.

X

Mary kept asking Horace to forgive her for her last surprise. But he stuck to his wooden silence. Most of the time he was shuttered in the guest room, almost motionless, it seemed (except for the empty bottles of French wine that kept turning up). Sometimes he went out for a while in the evening. When he got back, he ate a bite and then collapsed on the bed again, with open eyes. Mary often went in to look at him, late at night, and found him stiff as a doll, always with the same glassy stare. One night she was startled to see the cat curled up next to him. She decided to call the doctor, who started to give him injections. He was terrified, but seemed to take more of an interest in life. So she called in the boys to set up a new show for him.

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That night they had dinner in the big dining room. He asked for the mustard and kept sampling the wine. Afterwards, he drank his coffee in the little parlor; and soon he went into the showroom. The first scene had no caption: among softly lit plants, in a big rippling pool, he made out a number of loose arms and legs. He saw the sole of a foot stick out through some branches, like a face, followed by the leg, like a roving beast. As it touched the glass wall it stopped and contracted. Then came another leg, followed by a hand and arm that slowly wound around it as they met, like bored animals in a cage. He stood there for a while, absently watching the different combinations of limbs, till there was a meeting of toes and fingers. But suddenly the leg involved began to straighten out in the commonplace gesture of standing on its foot. He was disappointed and flashed his light at Walter, as he moved the podium on to the next scene. There he saw a doll on a bed, wearing a queen's crown. Curled up next to her was Mary's cat. This distressed him and made him angry at the boys for letting it in. At the foot of the bed were three nuns, kneeling on prayer stools. The caption said: "The queen died giving alms. She had no time to confess, but the whole country is praying for her." When he looked again, the cat was gone. But he had the uneasy feeling it would turn up again at any moment. He decided to enter the scene—watchfully, in case of any unpleasant surprises. Bending to peer into the face of the queen, he leaned a hand on the foot of the bed. At that moment, he felt another—one of the nuns'—hands on his. He must not have heard Mary's voice pleading with him, because the minute he felt the other hand he straightened up, stiff as death and started to open his mouth and move his jaws like a bird trying to flap its wings and caw. Mary took his arm; but he brushed her off in terror and began turning himself around with a little shuffle as he had the day she laughed in his face, pretending to be his negro mistress. She was frightened again and let out a scream. He tripped over a nun and knocked her down. Then, heading back out of the scene, he missed the small door and walked into the glass wall. There he stood beating on the glass with his hands, which were like birds knocking against a closed window. Mary didn't dare take his arm again; she ran to call Alex, who was nowhere to be found. Finally, thinking she was a nun, he came in asking what she wanted. She said, crying, that Horace was mad. They went into the showroom, but couldn't find him. They were still looking for him when they heard his steps in the gravel of the garden. When they caught him, beyond the flowerbeds, he was going toward the noise of the machines.

translated from the Spanish by Luis Harss

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ASPECTS OF HANDKE

THE FICTION

Peter Handke writes detective novels in a world defined by Wittgenstein, Chomsky, and other theorists of language and reality. If the self-reflective works of Ronald Sukenick, Gilbert Sorrentino, Robert Coover, and Steve Katz represent innovative fiction in its adolescence, Handke's work serves as a good example of what the post-innovative novel may be like. "I'm sick of those passages in our work that refer however suavely to how the work is being made or how it should be made," Katz declared recently, "although in a broader sense I still deal with the self-referential condominiums. The former seems to be at this point like nothing more than another dull literary convention to be purged, like the fat that has to be lifted off the chicken soup before you heat it up again." So much has been made of Beckett's generation, as the generation writing after Kafka and Joyce, that one may not realize that there is a whole new group come to prominence in the wake of the great mid-twentieth-century innovators. Handke serves notice that their time has come.

Of Peter Handke's nine works of prose, the first three remain untranslated from the German. *The Hornets* (1966) is the first person narration of a blind young boy; in the course of the novel he analyzes memories, dreams, and finally sequences of words themselves, as a way of understanding the sum of his awareness. The narrator is, in effect, a detective of his own process of reality. Handke's second novel, a crime thriller titled *The Hawker* (1967), transfers this technique to the act of writing. As a headnote to each chapter, the author discusses how the book should be developing according to the detective novel genre. It is the closest Peter Handke comes to a self-reflective metafiction; even here, one should note, the self-referential comments refer to the mechanics of the detective novel, rather than to fiction-making itself. Thematic and formal satire are the respective subjects of two collections, the latter translated as poetry: *A Welcome for the Board of Directors* (1967) and *The Inner World of the Outer World of the Inner*

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World (1969). According to Robert Pynsent, in Raymond Federman's *Surfiction*, the second volume employs the "semantic, syntactic, orthographical and emotional aspects of language. Microsituations are represented by sentences, words, sounds, or letters of the alphabet; and macrosituations by the blurred photographic and newsprint collages inserted between the texts." Handke's story "Three Readings of the Law," says Pynsent, is written as a register analysis: "the first reading consists of a list of naked words, slogans—and the audience claps after each one; the second is an objective explanation of what the slogan means in plain language—the audience grows uneasy and at the end boos and hisses; the third is a list of slogans with an explanation of their meanings hidden behind officialese and earns storms of applause from the audience."

The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick (1970), *Short Letter, Long Farewell* (1972), and *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams* (1972) have been translated into English and published in 1972, 1974, and 1975 respectively. All are firmly rooted in the process of detection: the first encompasses an actual murder and flight from apprehension, while the second finds a narrator being stalked by his estranged wife. All the while questions of language and reality come up; indeed, they are the heart of each story. Only in the third, *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*, does Handke seem to take the world for granted. But here he embarks on a deep-reaching analysis of his mother's suicide, and by the end, his examination of her world has proved to be as thorough as the boy's in *The Hornets*. In Handke's fiction, nothing may be taken for granted.

The range of language, all the way to silence, is demonstrated in the first scene of *The Goalie's Anxiety*. "When Joseph Bloch, a construction worker who had once been a well-known soccer goalie, reported for work that morning, he was told that he was fired. At least that was how he interpreted the fact that no one except the foreman looked up from his coffee break when he appeared at the door of the construction shack." We never know if Bloch's interpretation of the foreman's sign is correct; the fact that he has difficulty collecting back pay hints that he may be wrong. But the larger world that Bloch lives in demands that he energize it with his own words—reality is created by those words, and when they are absent, everything ceases to exist. Early in the narrative he is overcome by an inability to visualize anything: "He had barely closed his eyes again when the flowers and the tea kettle were unimaginable. He resorted to thinking up sentences about the things instead of words for them, in the belief that a story made up of such sentences would help him visualize things." At times, though, his

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verbalizing creates confusion. His imagined picture of a noisy garbage collection is contradicted by the picture of a departing bus and milk cans being loaded a block away. When this happens, Bloch is muddled; like a detective story in its early stages of confusion, the world does not fit together. When his constructions cannot reach the depth of his present reality, Bloch seeks out a simple provincial town (in fact on the very border of the country) where he can be content with easily controlled surfaces.

The predominance of surfaces may be the reason why Handke's next novel, *Short Letter, Long Farewell,* reads more conventionally. The narrator is in a foreign land, America; moreover, he is on a journey which moves him almost day by day from Providence to New York, and from there to Philadelphia, St. Louis, Tucson, California, and the mountains of Oregon. He lacks the time and knowledge to absorb more than the surfaces of things. But the country itself seems to be formed of surfaces. "I had hardly met anyone in America," he says, "who was immersed in anything. One look was enough; then you turned to something else. Anyone who stopped to look a little longer assumed the pose of a connoisseur. The same with the villages, they were never immersed in the landscape, they were always plunked on top of it; they stood out from their surroundings and seemed to have been put there by accident." As detached as possible, the narrator lets the world dance past him, articulating it as it goes—"As if life were taking place on a stage and there were no need for you to get mixed up with it." It is the same technique Joseph Bloch uses to control his reality in the little Austrian border town where he hides from the police. Handke's America is even more the perfect land for this type of life.

How may an analytical concern with language provide enough action for a novel? The drama is in part psychological: in *The Goalie's Anxiety* we follow Bloch's mind as it composes reality. As that reality becomes problematic, Bloch reacts, at one point violently. His acquaintance with a movie cashier leads to a set of linguistically predictable conversations. Bloch is irritated beyond answering, since he assumes that she already knows what he has to say. "Was he going to work today? she wanted to know. Suddenly he was choking her." Bloch's hands take over the job of controlling the world when his words have failed. When he fails to act at all, he disappears. "Gradually, when he said something now, he himself reappeared in what he said."

Words are the determining factor in Bloch's life. As a device, they are no more radical than the *donnée* of any detective novel, dictating

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the action each character must take and so giving coherence to the patterns of their fictional lives. Walter Abish, Handke's Viennese contemporary now writing in English, suggests his own similar theory in the Fiction Collective's anthology, *Statements:* "I have always thought that all the life networks that enable us to proceed wherever we are going, or prevent us from doing so, are predicated on a system called language." Handke's novels build lives to suggest how this theory works. Observing the locals in the border town cafe, Bloch associates them with words. "Within the segments themselves he saw the details with grating distinctness: as if the parts he saw stood for the whole. Again the details seemed to him like nameplates. 'Neon signs,' he thought." The waitress is so characterized by her pierced ear that she becomes it; a purse stands for the woman sitting next to it; and the ice-cream dishes define the cafe owner. As Bloch learns, the signs are domineering. "The grating details seemed to stain and completely distort the figures and the surroundings they fitted into. The only defense was to name the things one by one and use those names as insults against the people themselves. The owner behind the bar might be called an ice-cream dish, and you could tell the waitress that she was a hole through the ear lobe. And you also felt like saying to the woman with the magazine, 'You purse, you.'" On the other hand, such significations can bring one-dimensional characters to life, as from the singular details of a newspaper story Handke's protagonist in *Short Letter* forms an identifying kinship with the characters so described.

As he acclimates himself to America, Handke's narrator in *Short Letter* functions through his self-conscious narration. We find him doing this early in the novel, near the beginning of his trip:

> I walked east on Forty-second Street and turned north at Park Avenue. I felt as I had for a period in the past when in telling someone what I had just been doing I compulsively described all the partial actions of which the total was composed. If I went into a house, I never said, "I went into the house," but, "I wiped my shoes, turned the door handle, pushed the door, went in, and closed the door behind me"; or if I had written someone a letter, I always (instead of saying, "I wrote him a letter") said, "I took out a clean sheet of paper, removed the cap from my fountain pen, wrote the letter, folded it, put it in an envelope, addressed the envelope, affixed a stamp, and dropped my letter in the mailbox."

In this manner, Handke's work takes the logical next step beyond metafiction. The narrator is performing for himself the same act, with the same goal, as he would for the reader. "In unfamiliar surroundings,

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as I am now," he admits, "I tried to deceive my own sense of ignorance and inexperience by dissecting the few activities within my reach as though speaking of momentous undertakings." In *The Goalie's Anxiety*, Bloch disengages himself in a reversal of the same technique when his sentences drift off into nothingness. When the subjects and objects of each sentence are completely effaced, Bloch disappears.

The Goalie's Anxiety becomes an elaborate game played within the structure of language. When Bloch feels like he is losing grip, he uses the technique of the narrator in *Short Letter:* "He described the events to himself like a radio announcer to the public, as if this was the only way he could see them for himself. After a while it helped." Late in the novel, Bloch for a moment transcends language. "He saw and heard everything with total immediacy, without first having to translate it into words, as before, or comprehending it only in terms of words or word games. He was in a state where everything seemed natural to him." But all else remains a pathology of perception; for a while he deals directly with sign-pictures, and then returns to words themselves—"'Suds' 'poured' 'over' 'the doorsteps.' 'Featherbeds' 'were lying' 'behind' 'the windowpanes.'" Except for the murder he commits—and that act is performed in a manner so detached as to be almost gratuitous—Bloch has dealt with only the surface of the world. He penetrates nothing, and nothing penetrates him. As Handke observes, "He was so tired that he saw each thing by itself, especially the contours, as though there was nothing to the things but their contours."

In America, we have noted, Handke finds his perfect land of surfaces. Throughout the novel his narrator interprets the country through movies—usually historical portrayals such as John Ford's *The Iron Horse* and *Young Mr. Lincoln.* On his way across the country, the narrator visits with an artist who paints historically-based pictures, often for exhibition with corresponding movie productions. Again, the effect is of pure surface. At the end of his journey, closing the novel, the narrator meets director John Ford himself. Ford confirms the totality of surface, the lack of imaginative depth to his work: "'Nothing is made up,' he said. 'It all really happened.'" It is in terms such as these that Handke's narrator understands the United States. In *Short Letter*, the action is panoramic, but of zero penetration: things merely *happen*, events simply pass the narrator by as if on a moving stage. The experience is analagous to watching a film with almost no emotional participation. It is on this same level, or lack of level, that Joseph Bloch lives his life, for which the style of *The Goalie's Anxiety* provides the

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perfect index:

> The waitress went behind the bar. Bloch put his hands on the table. The waitress bent down and opened the bottle. Bloch pushed the ashtray aside. The waitress took a cardboard coaster from another table as she passed it. Bloch pushed his chair back. The waitress took the glass, which had been slipped over the bottle, off the bottle, set the coaster on the table, put the glass on the coaster, tipped the beer into the glass, put the bottle on the table, and went away. It was starting up again. Bloch did not know what to do any more.

The last two sentences, of course, are just the qualification that keeps Handke's fiction from being an imitation of the French New Novel. The writer's craft is not formed by the phenomenological code; rather the protagonist's life is being acted out within and against it. The tension between that code and the reader's larger perception creates the life of Handke's fiction.

The narrator/protagonist in *Short Letter, Long Farewell* bears several points of resemblance to Peter Handke himself. Their ages are the same; both are Viennese; and each is an active playwright. When the narrator discusses his dramatist's craft, he makes an interesting remark on the method of Handke's fiction. "It's hard for me," he says, "to write roles. When I characterize somebody, it seems to me that I'm degrading him. Everything that's individual about him becomes a tic. I feel that I can't be as fair to other people as I am to myself. When I make somebody talk on the stage, he clams up on me after the first few sentences; I've reduced him to a concept. I think maybe I'd do better to write stories." The problem, we learn, is that the author is dealing with people who formulate concepts to the point that they won't have to deal with them anymore. "They have words for everything. And then, because there aren't really any words for what they're trying to say, what they say is usually an invitation to laugh, a joke, even if they haven't formulated it with this in mind. That's how it is in my play. As soon as somebody says something, if only with a gesture, the character is reduced to a concept and I can't do anything more with him." The narrator speculates about introducing a new functionary to interpret the scene for authors—in simpler terms, the omniscient voice of fiction.

Handke's confessional prose work grants this voice full control. The seriousness of its subject demands it: subtitled "A Life Story," *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams* is an analysis of the suicide of the writer's mother. There is no matter for detection, no suspense in the narrative, other than an understanding of this terminal event. "In the village of

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A. (G. township)," reads the paper, "a housewife, aged 51, committed suicide on Friday night by taking an overdose of sleeping pills." The meaning of his mother's death must be put into words; otherwise, the narrator will be as lost as Joseph Bloch. He readily admits that "for, intensely as I sometimes feel the need to write about my mother, this need is so vague that if I didn't work at it I would, in my present state of mind, just sit at my typewriter pounding out the same letters over and over again." His method for composition, though, will be the same as for his fiction: "As usual when engaged in literary work, I am alienated from myself and transformed into an object, a remembering and formulating machine." The act, however, brings him "back to life."

From the beginning, the story of his mother's life tells of her attempts to distinguish herself from the hopeless mediocrity prophesized for women in her culture. She learns the manners of the bourgeois class, but in so doing forfeits her individuality:

> And so an emotional life that never had a chance of achieving bourgeois composure acquired a superficial stability by clumsily imitating the bourgeois system of emotional relations, prevalent especially among women, the system in which "So-and-so is my type but I'm not his," or "I'm his but he's not mine," or in which "We're made for each other" or "can't stand the sight of each other"—in which clichés are taken as binding rules and any *individual* reaction, which takes some account of an actual person, becomes a deviation. For instance, my mother would say of my father: "Actually, he wasn't my type." And so this typology became a guide to life; it gave you a pleasantly objective feeling about yourself; you stopped worrying about your origins, your possibly dandruff-ridden, sweaty-footed individuality, or the daily renewed problems of how to go on living; being a type relieved the human molecule of his humiliating loneliness and isolation; he lost himself, yet now and then he was somebody, if only briefly.

In terms of system, this typology is similar to the power of words in shaping reality. "In symbolic terms," Handke says of his mother, "she was no longer a NATIVE WHO HAD NEVER SEEN A WHITE MAN." Her type is as definite and defining as the objects in her kitchen: "the GOOD OLD ironing board, the COZY hearth, the often-mended cooking pots, the DANGEROUS poker, the STURDY wheelbarrow, the ENTERPRISING weed cutter, the SHINING BRIGHT knives, which over the years had been ground to a vanishing narrowness by BURLY scissors grinders, the FIENDISH thimble, the STUPID darning egg, the CLUMSY OLD flatiron, which provided variety by having to be put back on the stove every so often, and finally the

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PRIZE PIECE, the foot-and-hand operated Singer sewing machine." The roots for her suicide are apparent quite early. In the midst of these objectifications, "you ceased to exist." Her life has become so unimaginably abstract that she can be forgotten. Once she dies, "The burial ritual depersonalized her once and for all, and relieved everyone. It was snowing hard as we followed her mortal remains. Only her name had to be inserted in the religious formulas. 'Our beloved sister. . . .'"

In *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams* Peter Handke has assumed the function of Joseph Bloch in *The Goalie's Anxiety* and the narrator/protagonist of *Short Letter:* he himself is making the words, and so crafting reality. Handke discusses his fear of being lost within the language, where "the result is a literary ritual in which an individual life ceases to be anything more than a pretext"—the very mistake his mother made with her own life. Fearful of losing his balance in each sentence, he adopts a new approach, "starting not with the facts but with the already available formulations, the linguistic deposit of man's social experience. From my mother's life, I sifted out the elements that were already forseeen in these formulas, for only with the help of ready-made public language was it possible to single out from among all the irrelevant facts of this life the few that cried out to be made public." He wishes to penetrate the essence of her existence, but words are made only for the surface. "She refuses to be isolated and remains unfathomable; my sentences crash in the darkness and lie scattered on the paper."

The most refreshing aspect of Handke's work is that it is not combative. There are no belligerent attempts to *prove* the writer's inability to adequately portray his mother; instead, he simply goes about making an analysis of her suicide within the rules of language which any knowledgeable linguist or philosopher would agree describes the communal reality of the twentieth-century world. In a similar manner, Handke's innovations in drama discard illusionistic conventions only to work simply and directly with the real materials of theater. *Offending the Audience,* Handke's first published work, is a play which strips itself of all suspensions of disbelief until the matter at hand is just the actual audience experience; and even when the event has been reduced to the experience of the audience sitting there watching the "play," words alone become its substance—disembodied and often contradictory insults, representing nothing but themselves. In the preface to *Kaspar* (1967), one of Handke's "speak-ins" (*Sprechstücke*), the author tells his readers that such pieces "point to the world not by way of pictures but by way of words; the words of the speak-ins don't point at the world as something lying outside the words but to the world in the words themselves."

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Poetry is the genre where words are most easily taken for themselves, but Handke's work here stresses the point even more. The context he creates for his words-in-poems is self-consciously artificial, that of the series; and as often as possible, the series is deliberately experimental or unnatural—of "The Inverted World" where "I don't pronounce words, and words pronounce me; / I go to the window and I am opened," of the systematic changes in person recorded in "Changes During the Course of the Day," and ultimately of "The Japanese Hit Parade of May 25, 1968." These poems are from *The Innerworld of the Outerworld of the Innerworld*; in the collection *Nonsense and Happiness* (1974, 1976), Handke demonstrates how important words in their own sense, the poetic sense, can be, for the absence of that quality leads to "Life Without Poetry":

> In this monotonously glowing autumn world
> wiring too seemed nonsensical to me
> Everything pressed itself so much upon me
> that I lost my gift for fantasy
> Before the external magnificence of nature
> there was no imagining anything anymore
> and within the monotony of the sum total of daily impressions
> nothing particular moved me

In his recent fiction Handke has explored this very point of how easily one loses touch when the imagination dies. In *A Moment of True Feeling* (1975) Gregor Keuschnig dreams that he's killed a woman; this shocking thought makes him distrust everything else in his life. "Because everything had lost its validity, he could imagine nothing." Like the goalie of Handke's first prose work, Keuschnig is virtually disconnected from his world. "Aloud he listed everything that was to be seen—that was his only way of perceiving," since none of these things lives for him—that had been the doing of his imagination, which has now died. The past dies as well: "He couldn't remember the feeling, what he remembered was the *fact* of having been happy." People on the street are mere caricatures. He feels like a prisoner in Disneyland. His own manner becomes one of extroverted suicide, as "He wanted to abolish everything!" But life itself does that for him, for his mind no longer animates the world. "In any event, regardless of how he put his perceptions together," Handke tells us, "they arranged themselves, independently of him, into the traditional wellbred nonsense."

Keuschnig's act has been minimal, simply having a dream. In *The Left-Handed Woman* (published in *The New Yorker* for November 7,

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1977), the gestures are even more so. A family and even the persons in it disintegrate under the mindless pressure of a bland phrase, "my idea of a better life," which begins as a gradeschool copybook exercise for the eight-year-old son, proceeds to the husband's passing whimsy for a night at a luxury hotel, and ends with the wife's breakup of the whole family. The thought, however, is pervasive, to the exclusion of all else. It becomes the obsession of herself, of her friends and associates, and even the theme of a French novel she translates in her resumed career. All routine behavior is reduced to meaninglessness—stocking provisions in freezers, closets, and basement; walking endlessly through the night; making friends simply so that one's death won't leave one an undiscovered corpse for too long.

Philosophical change inevitably outstrips mere technical development. Handke's achievement is to write fiction which acknowledges it, and uses its salient features in the making of his literary art. Fictions such as *The Goalie's Anxiety, Short Letter,* and *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams* are possibly the best indication of how "realistic" fiction may survive in the newly conscious world. Anais Nin complained in 1968 that "we listen to jazz, we look at modern paintings, we live in modern houses of modern design, we travel in jet planes, yet we continue to read novels written in a tempo and style which is not of our time and not related to any of these influences." Peter Handke's novels are the first mature product of the future Anais Nin describes.

Jerome Klinkowitz

A PLAY

When Peter Handke's *The Ride Across Lake Constance* was performed at Lincoln Center several years ago, John Simon dismissed it as surrealist nonsense—the sort of nihilistic indulgence that had helped liberate art in the nineteen-twenties but was of no value today. Apparently Simon chose the wrong brand of nonsense from his giant catalog. What he presumably meant to invoke was the Dadaist variety.

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But what he thought is harder to understand, for *The Ride* is not a modern example either of the Dada spirit of archly playful negation, nor of surrealism's unconscious connections of images within a somewhat limited, because equally unconscious, range of emotion. If the play seems illogical in structure it is because logic is one of Handke's subjects; it is because he is trying to understand it rather than either embrace it or flee from it. *The Ride* is a formulation of the relationship between action and language, or, more precisely, between perception and interpretation. There is nothing of the surrealists' alternatives of cold emotional quietism or narrow frenzy in the face of outrageous imagery. *The Ride* is one of the most emotional intelligibly avant-garde plays ever written. One of its central, communicable feelings, for example, is a sense of the shame of self-consciousness, the shame that sets in from our knowledge of the difference between the self and the world. This knowledge is not only made possible by language but is synonymous with it.

This sense of shame is present in some form in all of Handke's plays, although it is not always immediately recognizable. In *The Ride* it is overcome at least temporarily through the paradox of aggravating its cause, deepening the division between the selves of the characters and the habits of the world. That is, by a marvelous birth of consciousness that ultimately turns out to be self-destructive. The play's perception of the peculiar way that dormant consciousness can awaken to a higher state of destructive passivity bears comparison with the notion of the *acte gratuit*, particularly as Stanley Kauffmann Americanized it in his original review of *Breathless:*

> Once I saw a small child at a cocktail party who was permitted by her parents to pass the canapé tray. The tray tipped slightly, the canapés began to slide slowly, and the child watched with complete fascination as they all fell to the floor.

The play can be seen as this process as experienced from within, as if the characters were both instigator and instigated: not only the hypnotically willful little girl but also sleeping hors d'oeuvres that had awakened happily at their first jostle and then come to understand their increasing helplessness before gravity in their stampede to the floor. Some choose it, some resist, some push others; but they all fall. The play is the half-random dynamics of the tumble, an imitation not of human behavior but of a process in time governed by the playwright's laws. As such it is no different from any other play, only more

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knowing than most, and less inclined to conceal that knowingness than practically all.

The play is progress to consciousness and death by consciousness. It begins with the character who is called in the text for convenience Emil Jannings, rousing himself from sleepiness with a vague, self-conscious will similar to Hamm's "Me to play." His condition is similar to the dream-like state of the horseman on the thinly-frozen lake in the anecdote referred to by the play's title. When the horseman becomes fully conscious he understands his predicament and dies.

The predicament is our reliance on the mind's interpretations of experience, and even more on arbitrary communal assignments of meanings to actions so that minds can work together. This insistence on the meaning of events gives our perceptions a function, gives ourselves a function of interpretation—something to do while existing—and of course makes communication possible. But it destroys our own relation to the world and to our own experiences. This self-estrangement is our dreamlike state. When the play's characters wake themselves into an authenticity where interpretation of experience is no longer unconsciously compulsive, they experience great joy, but find it no longer possible to live. They don't die happy, but atrophy. This is in essence the action of the play.

In dreams the imagination holds the contradictions of all the inner and outer worlds together without awareness of its feat. The play will make us aware. We become aware that conversations become silly when we talk of things that aren't present. We see our interpretations of events in the light of the grotesque complexity of their true causes.

> George: And then I saw the rings again, and when what I thought and what I saw coincided so magically, I was so happy for a moment that I couldn't help but put the cigar box in your hand. . . .
> Jannings: And I felt you were handing me the box voluntarily.

When forms of action, such as a sales transaction in a store, collapse, the characters don't know how to behave. They falsify experience to enter a form again. Or a form dictates what will happen: someone automatically closes an umbrella because he has crossed the street.

We discover we no longer know how to relate to things except through the mental images conjured by language. The number of steps in a staircase must correspond to the number we have for them in our minds or we fall.

Language in this play is the constricting power of mental images,

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not the oppressive power of common speech as in Handke's earlier works. Liberation will consist in recreating the infant's task of feeling its way around in the world.

When the characters have freed themselves they are thrilled to discover that language actually does correspond to reality once in a while. But it becomes apparent that these coincidences are all that's left to sustain them. Habit, for instance, may not be a valid reason for an act, but without it there may be no impulse ever to act. Feelings that are honestly described are seen to disappear, presumably because there is no ready image of them to retain. A new character brings the group back to forms, but her twin sister enters to contradict her. The group is left without enough structures of mind to live. An infant, metaphorically at least neither asleep nor awake, screams in their faces.

For such a demonstration as this play proposes it is necessary that the stage not pretend to be anything but what it is—a place of demonstration, and not a recreation of somewhere else. We are not watching imitation life but real theater. The large table in the center of the set is not only a piece of furniture, but also, as Handke once said of large center tables in an interview, a symbol of order. The set, dominated by converging symmetrical staircases, is overtly theatrical. All objects are intended to seem rooted to their spots. The action all takes place within an overfilled, unidentifiable room, a parody of the kind of stage set that contains everything the play needs but pretends to be just a normal living room.

The actors both are and play themselves. Although their words and gestures are all carefully joined together, the tone of the performance is apparently to be improvised each night. The specificity of physical action is crucial. Gestures must be as precise as words, since the interdependence of the two is one of the play's chief areas of investigation. This precision is something one usually associates with nonverbal or ritually verbal theater. But here it is set to work in a seemingly more conventionally organized theatrical event just so that the various relations between conventional and unconventional language and gesture can be explored. This play is in one sense a locating of nineteen-sixties experimental consciousness within a wider esthetic perspective. It is not itself an experiment, but one of the fruits of immediately preceding experiments. It does not seek merely to replace what is usual, but to find the exact relationship between the usual and what have proved to be its necessary replacements.

The form of this play does not reflect an attempt to find the best

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way to express some problem or condition we all know about. It is the only possible expression of a condition because that condition does not exist outside of it. The play does not throw light on anything that troubles our lives. It has the esthetic intensity and moral purity of a total abandonment to diversion.

As complex as it is, the play would have no meaning at all if the speeches and actions that comprised it were not lyrical, sensitive, well-observed, striking or whatever in their own right.

> Once when I bent down over a bouquet of carnations while there was a great deal of noise around me, I couldn't smell anything at first.
>
> Once I walked down a staircase and had such a desire to let myself fall that I began to run out of fear as soon as I had reached the bottom.
>
> Once I ordered (or did I) that a cake be cut. "Where?" I was asked. Ever since then I've been unable to imagine a cake. You try drawing a circle in your mind but you don't know where to begin. Finally there's a noise in the brain as if a boiling egg were popping. Quiet! Shut up! I can imagine what you want to say! The circle! I become dizzy when I'm supposed to imagine it! And when I become dizzy I become furious. . . .

But whose voices are these, the author's or the characters'? What characters?

That's the problem. If one can fault this play, I think it is along the following lines. Emotion in the play, as we have seen, comes from perception, the chief emotion specifically from a perception that liberates perception. The characters are briefly happy when they think they have found the way to keep their mental apparatus from falsifying their experiences. The problem with this is not Handke's locating the source of emotion in the discovery of an idea (a common enough occurrence in anyone, crazed or otherwise, who thinks), but whether emotions can be experienced by characters who are not characters. The question is, can a particle—an hors d'oeuvre—feel; not what caused the feelings. Perhaps a presentation of the long-term emotional ironies of an intellectual awakening is not really the best way for Handke to display his instinctive distrust of the commonest forms of experience. In a series of fascinating speeches the character called Jannings describes what it's like "on a day when one feels at odds with one's work." Perhaps a play in which such things are acted rather than described would be a good project for Handke after what looks in *The*

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Ride like an attempt to create dramatic form for perceptions too profound for experience. Another way of saying this is that he has not quite learned the difference between experiential text and existential subtext, or between mature art and something similar that could be called the shaping of heightened consciousness. There is a difference, or else we would have to weaken our idea of art until it included proofs of geometric theorems. For all of its strange penetration Handke's work still lacks something of the mystery of experience. But this is the kind of criticism we reserve for works of distinction.

Ira Hauptman

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POEMS

Anthony Barnett

IX

In doubt I trust.
This angular flower
picked for you wants to speak.
And please let it.
Pink, white it doesn't matter,
only take care, dear one,
what a hard, harsh course
without retribution
as I don't know you *will*.

X

I love your stocky,
your high cheekbones,
dark, dark, red, red.

My veins are swollen,
you lift your racket
and storm. I love your thighs
I see up.

I would like to kiss you
and rub your pulled muscle.

XI

You and I stole circa 2000 kroner from I.

Who is I?

We surrounded the peak.
For the first time grow lemons, oranges
and a solitary grapefruit.

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While painting a horrible man
touched your white, white thigh, he
doesn't mean to be horrible.

Horrible, horrible, horrible.

All the horrible things you can think of.

Dream, dream, tell me it is a dream.

Ray Di Palma

LADY LADY

Your eyes are like streets where all the theaters
Have closed for the weekend
A lick of mystery in all that but
I'm not one to stand around while you watch
Manhattan hustling through the cluttered lofts
Of the Pin Industry

The way you toss about I can taste your dreams
And though you show me how corporate glory
Is inscribed on an explosion I want to tell you
Where you can get off
Before we get better acquainted
Comme il faut

So I'm telling you this once and for all
The world is backing up and none too soon
The Manichean frostiness of these April nights
Circulates like high organ notes through my thoughts
When I read your diary I can see you behind the mirror
Sucking off the mortal coil

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Three Poems by Robert Dean

CONSCIENCE

The Boy
The day when there is plenty would you please telephone.

The Girl
Yes, I will be ready then to let you know. Though
did you hear—
(inaudible whisper) We cannot sneer
at it.

The Boy
Should we say then, hang it all?

The Girl
Yes.

The Boy
Good. Bring out a bottle. We will be most timely.

THE CHILD

bent over
to reach what is sitting

a kiss
without romance

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VERISIMILITUDE

equivocal
to the way
things are

not what was
played
but the dramaturgy
involved

omitting
intrinsic possibilities
but attempting
a one to one
prosthetic

precedence
more than
containment.

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Ted Greenwald

HOW IS IT

I turn over
A new museum leaf
The light is new
And right on the spot
I was just thinking about
A fleet is about to set out
On the ocean light
Water turns to sky
And makes the eye
Blend ingredients in a bend
Shaped like an ear
A new speaker is speaking
I hear the words
They sound along
The halls of the balls
I turn to find them
As if I knew where to turn
Isn't that the sound
That's present
Isn't that the sound
That's gifted
Isn't that *something*
I'd like to put upon
The walls
And take down
Take apart
And put in a mood
The instructions to which
I say aloud

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Two Poems by Mei-mei Berssenbrugge

SPRING STREET BAR

And last night a man came in
to tell her of stars and clouds moving fast
though the day itself had been dark and thick
when she tried to write to George, at first
without paper, which worked fine from Mercer Street
where bits of cloth and poisonous gas held letter
shapes well, but in the sheer air over his house
words ascended instead of entering the chimney
clearly marked by smoke. He was baking bread
with the yellow dog napping beside him
Each word rose on an updraft the hawk used, too
then dissolved among ghosts of Indians and fish
when the poisons were flushed down by snow

She knew about ghosts and also the hawk
they had watched rise without moving at the edge
of the plain, until it was gone. She had asked
could he still see it, to hear *yes* and watch
his blue eyes scan space. The trail to the ruin
had seemed to crumble under her feet. Handholds
pocked with braille instead of rain warned her
So she took some paper and began as she used to
when there had been a sky, to write about the sky

THE TRANSLATION OF VERVER

A roan lizard writhing on a dead leaf
is the pulse, but the flash of wings is unknown
as what the first faith rests on, its color
and degree of translucence, or whether the cry
is a bird's or human, though the beat is drums
the hue of one feather, and a rooster's dreaming
before dawn is common in our language, as quarrels

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in the night, what you call "random possession"
Randomness, what it rests on. By morning
the green lizard shakes a new palm leaf
That we can still hold the light like sea shells
our chance, is first faith, and repeat
the spiral swirl of a fallen blossom on the path
the salmon color fading, a new one falling
Each a god's descent to the papery music of wind
sweeping away dry ones in a rainless summer
as if the hue of the next feather were the shedding

Petionville, Haiti 1976

Brian Swann

FAIRY TALE

he fed the horse in its soft mouth.
it dunged and he turned into the palace,
its glass veranda and plants, its
garden party with sun. he'd
married the princess and now went
looking for her. he knew the queen-mother
disapproved though she was nowhere
to be seen. a footman approached
with a silver tray and nothing on it.
the footman pointed to the flowered carpet
under his feet and left.
the man put his toe under the carpet
and found another underneath. he got
the message and left for ever.
outside the horse too had gone.
and its soft mouth.

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Lois Moyles

NAMED LAZARUS

For four days he drifted
in a human boat, knotted at both ends
to keep out the light.
And the sun was wasted.
And the rain was wasted.
Even death was wasted on Lazarus
that might have been instructive
somewhere else.
During that time
what furrowed the inward air was not eye,
more like arrow towards narrowed lids
and beyond.
He marked the walls
as the hopping chalk commanded.
He tapped on pipes but got no reply.
except the sounds of powders falling.
When halftimbered faces of mourners
collapsed around him
he could not help them, because
the barely perceptible soul upwind of his body
could not support sunlight,
and because his old estate
was melting away like snow
that would not pack, would not hold his weight.

Then for some reason
the whole costly colony started up again—
became the heart's ideal again—
arrived at by rooted runner.
And his brain, piled like a rope in the dark.
apart from understanding,
was tugged forward.
Winebottle winds poured over his wounds,

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and all textures without memory
made way for his savage denseness.
BLESS THE ANTHRACITE FROM WHICH RED IS TAKEN
BLESS THE ROPES HOPPING ON THEIR ENDS,
AND THE BELLS THAT LIFT THEM,

Out of the ground, with his coat carried before him
like a folded map—
Out of the long superfluity of sleep
unwinding white as Arabia,
to mark the sun again as the stone alone
left unturned.
Now, like all for whom breath is necessary to begin,
and the end of it to end,
he fishes the wind for word of his fame.
To catch in his own name
the restitution he can,
for that lost silence.

Jenny Joseph

AGAINST THE PERSONALITY CULT

Kind of you, sunshine, to come out just now
As if for us, materials for pattern making
Suddenly laid to hand.

The thought is that someone in control
Is sensitive and amiable to our needs.
The point of patterns is to be thorough, to recur, to conclude.
This one goes on: sun mist dark dull days, and open eyes
When we are nowhere.

So shine, sun, bless you, but not for us.
Shine only, and I hope I'll be there.

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Leon Stokesbury

REYNALDO IN PARIS

"Ooo la! la!" remarked Reynaldo, "Tonight
My wick shall dip in ecstasies once more
As I plunge deeper through that nunnery door,
Miss Mimi's house of sale, then slam it tight.
Back home, I smelled the rotten fault all right,
So took the bucks and split from that dumb bore
And got out while the gettin was good, before
Shit hit the fan and blotted out the light.

'What wine so sweet as little Mimi's seat!'
Now that's the song I'm singing every day.
So let them grab each other by the balls.
For what care I what slick, incestuous meat
They gnaw between their sheets. And, what care they
For fardel-bearing sots who play their thralls."

Paul Violi

SLUMP

Extension cords intertwined with cobwebs, a wreath
of arrogance and laziness. The draft blows
through the floorboards, dust falls from cracks
in the ceiling. This small, cluttered room,
formerly the tack room in a stable.
This poem typed on an IBM Selectric
under an 150 watt GE bulb. Two types
of correction fluid applied when needed:
"Liquid Paper" or "Ideal"; both brands look and smell

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the same, though one contains harmful vapors
and should be kept hidden from children.

Now I will tell you what an honest man I am.
The last time I felt the magical force of boredom
I stole its pure and heavy wand. I wave it,
a prize, from some pinnacle in the sorry recesses
of my mind, in a light as cold as my teeth,
dry as the lies on my tongue. For what more
can someone ask than to have floated like a stone
over that barrenness, to claim it, once
and only once, all for himself; breathe the stale air
where the earth was lifted away like a stone
and starve his vision in its limitless absence;
know how far above the stink of the supernal
the weakest moment can propel him
before sending him back, unknowably changed,
to light a cigarette and blow the first puff
against the blank page or the whites of your eyes.

Now I will tell you all I know of greed and paradise.
Cold air has replaced the thoughts in my blood.
Clouds leave their skeletons sliding down
my windows like melting frost while I slide
into the sleep of an ox struck by lightning,
lightning warm as a kiss.
Then the damn ox dies, leaves me standing there
to sniff its sleep that sweetens the air
with so many other mindless flowerings.
I planned to go somewhere I couldn't imagine,
but that's what this white weather is all about:
grand deceptions whistled away colorless as steam
while one obvious world verges on the next.

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Marc Cohen

STAIRWAY BEACH

Another dream has no time
To give to itself. It is clawed
By the raven who basques
In the sunlight of permanent
Literary history. After another

Woman, another still rounder woman
Appears, lifting down to another
Pit of envy. I must stay away
From the cinema, and the sad sheets
Of darks and lights. Rivers

Jolt with the sun, the yellowish thing
Strides against rivers, and there is
Always after with the stars.

Each new subway rush
Puts the older man in our face.
It was a snow of poor circumstance,
And a steady spring warmth
That wore the cables down over

The Atlantic. This is not
An anonymous dream, it has a caller,
And one who answers in the night,
And toils with a girl's choir.
You have to use the sand

For something. The sullen ships
Are undone by the oak cut piers.
There were no Christmas parcels

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That year, and here on his holiday
We remember this as belief.
An old myth takes the form
Of an old friend. Believe in the time
Of year. Another stairway and the raven

Would not have made it. Passage
Into the sun grows more bitter.
The windfall beckons the oaks,
Birth of blues is yet another trade horse.
Adam was there. The wanderers map

Their route with dry stars, another
Rounder woman appears. Now
We are dealing in spellbound horses.

Her heart was long, rectangular
In its praise. Sheep dogs
Bark at the stables, it is clear
And cold, and the stars are wet.
Witches were burned before.

The caller must answer.
In the wilderness, down by the shrubs,
Dwarfed dreams sometimes catch on fire.
Small skulls have been dug up,
And large steeples buried.

A lot of Carbon-14 was involved.
The steps are softer stone, the view
Is decent. They have sought requiem

In the rooms overlooking
The sulphur deposits. Another mist
Is carried over, finished off by sleep.
Requiem is also for the raven who sometimes
Catches on fire when Adam bends the light.

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Two Poems by Richard Thomas

IN THE MOMENT

The keeping down of fever
the coming forward of water
the correction of images
the turning in and
the turning out
from here
to where
there are days and days
and landscapes fired in the brain
and things taken and things given
too soon or too late too few or too many
twice three-times fourth and fifth
and fever always under always near
proximity of the edge
indignity of the end
phantoms in the race all phantoms
bodies notwithstanding
eyes notwithstanding
hearts notwithstanding
hands notwithstanding hold them
hold them
close keep down
this fever

A SMALL HAND

A small hand appeared, warm and sudden
with the texture of life, a witness
to loneliness who took hold,
and led out of the old, sullen
circle into the house of the heart's fitness.
So tiny and so bold.

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Anne Waldman

MAUVE FLOWERS OF THE UBIQUITOUS WISTERIA

This lapse attributed to the most jarring
of opium
"Hello, monkey" they are saying for
"Hello, money"
I have misheard you children
very sorry to be awake now to
undeviating aromatic shrub
in your lush places
You, children, dwelling high among
the clouds and rainbows and clear blue skies
while I (harsh blue-red wine)
very sorry to be awake, tottering
under granite weeping sky
I think the secret dies with you,
the monstrous things without fur and feather
forfeit the art of leisure
The jade horse at grass beyond the ha-ha
skips and froliks while I
take a solitary dinner, an early dark bed.

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Phyllis Rose

PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN OF LETTERS

Although photographs show her invariably elegant, wearing clothes on her long lean frame with negligent grace, Virginia Woolf always felt shabby and unattractive. She was not comfortable in life. Things that other people do easily, without thinking, such as going to a store to buy a dress, could be difficult for her, sometimes insurmountably so. She had to construct normal gestures painfully, as other people painfully write prose. In some ways, her greatest personal triumphs were in the realm of the absolutely ordinary, like hiring a governess for her sister's children. Performing such an act, she felt she had successfully impersonated what she never believed she was, a real woman.

Her husband treated her, and she usually treated herself, like a finely tuned mechanism constantly in danger of flying apart. If she stepped too hard at any point, if she worked too hard or slept too little, got angry or jostled routine, the nitroglycerin inside her brain would explode. From childhood she had been fearful, afraid of provoking disasters, and disasters had come. Her mother had died, then her sister Stella, and then, at a time of confused feelings about him, her father. The magical associations of childhood, according to which one's evil thoughts alone can cause disaster, never left her, so magical prohibitions marked out her path through adult life. If she revealed herself, allowed people to see her as she really was, terrible things would happen, either to herself or others. People would jeer at her and she would go mad, or someone would die. She could not speak openly of her feelings. She envied those, like Ethel Smyth, who could, and yet, so terrified was she of open conflict, that she preferred to lose a friend than to endure a "scene."

Hatred, love, and fear were transmuted into faintly malicious banter. Irony and ladylike manners served as cosmetics for the soul. So much energy went into self-concealment and the construction of a charming façade, that little energy was left for imaginative sympathy. Like many people who are acutely responsive to other people's reactions to them, she was sensitive to nuances of gesture and appear-

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ance, but of people's deeper drives her perception was dim. She compensated in her novels by making character of secondary importance, by diffusing her own lyrical response to life throughout them. In her personal life she compensated by being an intrepid asker of questions. How does it feel to wake up in the morning on a Tuscan farm? How, exactly, does a scientist extract protein from minced liver? She had a hunger for precise information. But almost everyone who mentions this habit of hers mentions also their sense of the alienation behind it. She questioned, because she felt cut off from the world of fact. Iris Origo has described her as an insect beating against a pane of glass to get to a light on the other side. David Cecil thought her like a beautiful mermaid, who would swim up out of the sea to have a look at the rest of us—remote, but very curious. Alix Strachey said she always looked as though she were surprised to find herself there. Her bodily existence *was* a surprise, and not always a pleasant one.

People who knew her frequently describe her like a fairy-tale princess, so unusual as to be otherworldly, so elegant of build, with such deep-set eyes, so wraithlike, so distinguished, and so fragile. When she rubbed her hands by the fire, you could almost see through them. But what made her one of the most enchanting people in the world to be with was her wit and imagination. She was always "taking off," talking about the most unexpected subjects or developing some absurd premise into a spectacularly baroque verbal edifice. Since people were not quite real to her, she often made them up—to their faces and to their astonishment. Once she had pried loose from them a nugget of fact, she went on to coat it, to engulf it in her own imaginative wave. It did not seem to occur to her that people might object to serving as fodder for her fantasies. She was far from being a comfortable and kindly presence—people who demand to be amused, who demand of themselves that they be amusing, rarely are comfortable to be with—but few people seemed to mind. One looked for kindliness elsewhere; one turned to Virginia for imaginative delight. Children, those excellent judges of adult vivacity, always looked forward to her visits. She was, in conversation, a fantasist, an inventor, a teller of tales, not a scrupulous intellectual. Wild, spontaneous, abundant, her talk seemed to come from the same part of her mind as the racing thoughts of her madness and the inspired frenzy of her writing. When she laughed so hard at something she'd said that tears came to eyes, Leonard would begin to look concerned.

Beneath that high-strung inventiveness was a soul that guzzled affection. As a child, she would ask her sister "Do you like me better than . . . ?" naming a list of friends and relatives. As a woman in her

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fifties she played the same game, explaining to the puzzled object of her questions that the response she wanted was not sober self-questioning and scrupulous honesty but emotional extravagance. Her own set was tight-lipped. Vanessa, for example, could never adequately respond to her sister's declarations of love which she realized constituted demands for a return in kind. To satisfy her need, as imperative in its way as a junkie's, Virginia turned to women of a different sort, to women who had retained the knack of expressing simple affection, to hostesses like Ottoline Morrell and Sybil Colefax, who flattered her self-esteem as an artist, and to downright, emphatic, unselfconscious women like Vita Sackville-West and Ethel Smyth, who were not embarrassed to talk about their feelings and whose feelings for Virginia were gratifyingly exuberant. But even when she obtained the enormous infusions of affection and esteem that she required, the effects soon wore off, for she did not have that irrational, unshakable sense of her own worth which, when it is found at all, is found in people who have been extravagantly wanted and loved as children and which such lucky people carry through life. No amount of external approval can make up for that feeling. For Woolf, certainly, the honors, the fame, and the money she eventually won for herself did not make up for it.

As she got more famous, she felt no more secure. The gap between her private feelings and her public position was perhaps the most enduring feature of her inner world, stretching back to earliest childhood. The kind of mother everyone thinks of as perfect frequently doesn't give enough love to one particularly needy little soul, which may be one of the reasons that in later years, Virginia treasured every reference to her mother's malice, any description painting a moustache on that madonna. Love was the first deceit: that she loved and that she was loved. Other deceits were to follow, real and imagined. Her socially impeccable half-brother was really after her body. Lonely and needy in her deepest self, she was forced to play the charming youngest daughter in a big happy family. It was a betrayal of her real self. It was false in every way, because as she knew well life was a matter of unsatisfied longings, pain, and guilt. By her teens, Virginia had developed a fairly complete dual identity. Her real self read books, wrote, lived in a private world of fantasy. Her false self, centered on her body, with which her real self felt little connection, got dressed in seed pearls and silk, served tea, and made polite conversation.

R. D. Laing's brilliant description of the schizoid personality in *The Divided Self* must be mentioned here, although in suggesting that Woolf's inner world was of the type described by Laing, my intent is not clinical and certainly not judgmental. The states of being Laing

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describes many of us will have experienced. Madness is to Laing an exaggeration, a chaotic and imprisoning caricature, of an alienation not limited to the mad. The personality he calls schizoid does not experience itself as a unified whole but is split in two fundamental ways, in its relation to the world, from which it feels separate, and in its relation to itself, for it is divided into two or more selves, a real self, which must remain hidden, and a false self, which must interact with the world the real self does not trust. The threshold of security is so low for such a person, that everything outside seems a threat. The false self goes through the motions of compliance to the demands of that threatening world—father, mother, husband, or whatever—but eventually accumulated hatred against the person who has come to be seen as a tyrant pours out. Love threatens loss of self, so that such people are reluctant to love. Their essential defense against the loss of self they so much fear is to pretend that no self exists, to be anonymous or incognito, or to pretend to have no body. A schizoid organization need not degenerate into chaos; it is capable of creativity. Indeed, since love is so difficult for such a person, life threatens to be meaningless without some creative work. But of course, once the creative work is finished, the hidden self is embodied and terribly threatened by exposure to the hostile gaze of the world outside.

Woolf noticed much of this in herself but explained it in her own way. She thought her insanity was inherited, and so, to some extent it may have been, a genetic predisposition aggravated by the circumstances of early childhood. She also thought she'd inherited a fear of men which modulated into a disgust with sex, and that seems highly unlikely. But if she ignored the potential importance of her earliest years in explaining her inner makeup, she didn't ignore the effects on her self-esteem of social conditioning, of the treatment accorded women, while she was growing up. The "ontological insecurity" Laing evokes is not a problem only of women, but in Woolf's mind the perils of identity were intimately connected with her femaleness. She saw how the self-confidence of men was systematically nurtured by British society whereas women's was almost as systematically attacked. She became sensitive to the minuets of ego in a group, quick to notice coercion and manipulation in any form. Much of what was hostile in the outside world she identified as patriarchal. Many of her personal experiences—her social and sexual bullying by George Duckworth—made sense to her as expressions of patriarchal high-handedness. Feminism was her only acceptable way of stating publicly the sense of oppression and persecution she suffered from. Since some of the oppression she noted was real, feminism became the point at which her

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private fears and fantasies touched on public issues. For her, it served a therapeutic function. It was the only perspective she had on her life which allowed her to see herself as part of a group whose problems could be traced to common sources.

Superimposed on the class structure as usually defined, she saw a much simpler grid of power—insiders and outsiders. Women, along with the poor, were outsiders in England, and to be born female partially offset the advantages of being born to money and privilege, for although wealth might be counted on to bring freedom to young men, to young women it seemed to bring only greater restrictions on their experience and mobility in the name of protection and good breeding. This had been her own experience, and she assumed it was general for what she called in *Three Guineas* "the daughters of educated men." Because the family's education fund had been devoted to her brothers, she felt she had been deprived of the best training and the widest experience of life, had missed out on discussing Plato casually, before a fire, with her intellectual equals, had missed out on walking the streets of London alone by night. She imagined herself a kind of maiden enchanted by the evil power of patriarchy; outside her tower lay the world, but like the Lady of Shalott, she could view it only indirectly, through the medium of books. It is the nineteenth-century myth of the artist with a feminist twist—she is locked in the palace of art because she is a well-born woman.

As a young woman, it took her a long time to convince herself that difference of style did not mean inferiority, that she had her own voice, unique, feminine, worth attending to. The Immured Maiden became the Outsider, who derived strength and distinction from exclusion. Nothing is more striking in her career than the crazy see-saw between two very different kinds of works, works of genuine originality and works of academic discipline. She wrote radically individual novels like *Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves, Between the Acts,* and parts of *The Voyage Out,* but she also repeatedly—one might almost say compulsively—turned out books in which there was as little of herself invested as possible; *Night and Day, The Years,* and the biography of Roger Fry, massive, time-consuming, exhausting exercises in self-suppression. Writing style, identity, and madness were perilously interconnected. When she felt threatened, she clung to the novel of fact and traditional form. She wrote *Night and Day,* for example, while the idea for her new style was taking shape, but she fought the excitement and the terror of the new style and stuck to her academic task because she had just been insane (from 1913 to 1915) and feared becoming insane again. The traditional novel was her magical

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antidote. At such times she relapsed into the Immured Maiden, writing to fit some imaginary paternal standard of reality and fiction, renouncing her terror-filled individuality.

Her political consciousness—and feminism was her only true politics—ebbed and flowed, and there is a striking correspondence between its heights and times of her good work. Her writing was at its best in the twenties when her feminism was firmest. It faltered in the thirties under the onslaught of the very different notions of what constituted politics of the young men of the left. Losing her feminist perspective, she lost confidence in herself. It was the personal faith which gave her the courage to write authentically, without warping her talent to suit phantom models of validity. Writing *Three Guineas*, as I see it, enabled her to write *Between the Acts*, one last novel in her own voice and style.

"My terror of real life has always kept me in a nunnery," she wrote to Ethel Smyth in 1930, when they were relatively new friends and Virginia was explaining herself. Unlike Ethel, the eccentric composer who was unafraid to compare the slow movement of a symphony to the movement of her own bowels, Virginia had always been a sexual coward—so goes her confession. Then she had gotten married and her brains had gone up in fireworks, and although she was nearly crippled by the fierce discipline of madness, she went on to discover in it almost everything she wrote about. While other versions of her life emphasized the way in which her development had been stunted by particular men or by patriarchal attitudes more generally, this version emphasizes fear, cowardice, and the uses of madness, and any just portrait of her inner world must keep in balance both these pressures, the psychic and the social, without losing sight of the fact that, despite everything, she was a creative, productive, and vital person who made life yield up its fruits.

Writing had been her refuge as a child. She escaped from the emotional turmoil and fitful hypocrisy of downstairs life at Hyde Park Gate to the quiet of her own room, where the authentic life could be lived, the life of the mind. Some girls play at dressing up, copying their mothers; she played at letters, copying her father, until that play became the chief justification of her life. The presentation of her work remained throughout her life a source of anxiety, as it was when she and Vanessa left a copy of the *Hyde Park Gate News* next to their mother's chair, for there was always the possibility that approval would not be forthcoming. But if presentation was hazardous, the act of writing was always bracing. Art provided the way of reconciling personal contradictions into harmonious wholes, of fitting, let us say,

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Septimus Warren Smith and Mrs. Dalloway into the same book. It was a way to make use of her internal sense of division. Moreover, for a person terrified of so much of the world outside her, writing books offered a way of retiring from the world without abandoning the hope of communication—without, that is, retiring into a world so private she was actually insane. Leonard Woolf, along with many others, saw that there was a close connection between her madness and the sources of her creativity, but it is equally true that her creativity was her principal stay against madness.

Finishing a book was dangerous, not just because of the imminence of presentation and self-revelation. If she was not already working on another book, her underlying guilt and anxiety came to the surface, no longer kept in control by the sheer activity of writing. Or perhaps she was simply exhausted from the effort. She became irritable and melancholy. She felt her mind was bobbing like a cork on the ocean. Absorbed in her work, she lived an underwater existence; she resented interruptions which hauled her, like an indignant fish, to the surface. When she set to work, she would light a cigarette, take her writing board on her knees, and let herself down, like a diver, she said, into the sentence she had written the day before. After some twenty minutes she would see a light in the ocean depths and stealthily approach, flinging a sentence like a net over some sea pearl which was likely to slip away, and which, brought to the surface, might not look anything like what it had underwater. Very little of her imaginative effort went into scene-building or dramatic construction. An image, a picture (like that of her father sitting in the boat at St. Ives) or an experimental notion (like the middle section of *To The Lighthouse*) would flash into her mind, often when she was walking, and from then on the business of writing consisted of fitting words onto the backs of rhythm. These subaquaeous pursuits were her greatest excitements in life.

Whether she was in her study, writing, or walking the Sussex downs, or strolling about the streets of London, she had the capacity for total absorption in her work. Louie Mayer, when she first started work as the Woolfs' cook at Rodmell, was startled to hear her talking to herself, asking questions and answering them, as she took her morning bath in the room over the kitchen. She was trying out the sentences that had come to her the night before. Rest consisted of varying her literary activity, turning from fiction to criticism or from criticism to fiction, taking a break for memoirs from time to time, and perpetually making time for correspondence and her journal. If writing articles was like

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tying up her mind into brown paper parcels, tying up parcels seemed seductively simple when she was writing fiction. But when she was doing journalism, she would long to fly free in fiction once more. This wasn't mere contrariness; it was a finely supervised monitoring of her own psychic states, the exercise of conscious will providing an antidote for her more subterranean (or submarine) creativity, and vice versa. Reading, too, presented itself as a psychic exercise, and not just a way of taking in information—it was a state which consisted, she said, in the total elimination of the ego, providing a disembodied and trance-like rapture. There is, you will note, something sensual in this characterization of reading, as there was in Woolf's enjoyment of literary activity in general. Until the last drafts of a work, when she went back over the manuscript with the impersonal mediation of a typewriter (going over the same page three and four times), she was a longhand writer, sensitive to the texture of the paper, to the flow of ink, to the feel of the pen nibs, about which she was very particular.

She had known great writers in her childhood with the result that literary greatness seemed a thing of the past, just as mountains one saw as a child remain in the memory higher and more majestic than any seen in later years. Greatness was someone who came to tea and to whom your parents introduced you. Though she was the center of the literary life of London, she was never again to be conscious of greatness as in the days when Henry James or George Meredith walked through the door of the house in Hyde Park Gate. She was a bad judge of her contemporaries partly because of familiarity. T. S. Eliot was "Tom," with his dotty wife and his overdone American manners. She came, over the years, to love him very much, and, in literature, his rhythm, his vision of London, and his sense of transitions and timing all influenced hers. Nevertheless, she was far from being in awe of his achievement. He was one of the best poets of the age (the others, to her mind, were Yeats and de la Mare), but they were all frail reeds compared to the great poets of the past. The contemporary writer who had influenced her most was E. M. Forster, but that was in her early years, and by 1930 she had come to see his work as immature, impeded, diminished. Typically, she perceived the work as a reflection of the man, who was son, daughter, sister, and husband to his aged mother with whom he lived, the two of them like a pair of mice in a nest. Of the great writers alive in her lifetime, her awe was reserved for Thomas Hardy, a survivor from the past, a friend of her father's.

Snobbery, too, prevented her from realizing what a heroic literary age she lived in. She could not really appreciate Joyce (and she tried

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hard to, because Eliot admired his work so much) because of his earthiness, which she considered ill-bred obscenity, and she realized much too late the stature of D. H. Lawrence, alienated from him by his working-class origins and also by John Middleton Murry's approval.

Contemporaries, moreover, provoked an unhealthy sort of rivalry. They were doing the same thing she was, but—as she put it—on a different railway track. It was distracting. She had to remind herself that "East Coker" could be good and her own work, different as it was, could also be good. With French writers, she was on safer ground. They were from a different country, wrote in a different tradition. She could read Colette and Proust with pleasure, while Mansfield and Joyce produced anxiety and irritation. Tolstoy, so distant from her in time, geography, and background, could evoke her strongest admiration. Although she lived among writers, read new books constantly for review and for the Press, her eyes were partially closed to them, and her deepest nourishment continued to come from the literature of the past and from her own experience.

As publisher, journalist, essayist, novelist, polemicist, and diarist, Virginia Woolf's literary endeavors matched her father's in heroic energy and achievement, and at some point she must have realized that. She had won her competition, but who was left to hand out the prize?

* * *

She was almost sixty years old when she died, a fact that always startles me, for I imagine her dying young. Because of illness, her career was a belated one, but long before the age at which Woolf killed herself in an incipient depressive state, Balzac and Dickens had killed themselves through manic overactivity. For Virginia Woolf, because of the careful guardianship of her husband, it was easier to slip off and drown herself than it would have been to kill herself by overwork.

It was typical of Leonard Woolf's conscientious concern for Virginia that he should conceive the notion of getting her to print to keep her from unhealthy involvement in her own imagination. After the massive mental breakdown which so inauspiciously began their married life, he daily kept track of her health, metering work and play. When she caught cold, he moved her bed for her and dressed her in his dressing gown. He never complained. A rationalist saint, and yet, as any reader of his autobiography is aware, a man of almost numbing common sense. It hardly seems fair to blame Leonard for fussiness in his treatment of Virginia—a person tends to get the treatment she expects, and she might not have survived as long as she did without his

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watchful care and protection—and yet perhaps he was overly protective. A lovely story, perhaps apocryphal, but nonetheless expressive, relates that when a cow wandered into the field adjacent to Virginia's bedroom and stuck its head through her window, Leonard bought the field, so that this event, which had startled, but also amused Virginia, might not recur. (Quentin Bell believes he bought the field to prevent its being built upon.)

The doctors they consulted about Virginia's illness were "nerve specialists," and they called what she suffered from neuresthenia, fatigued nerves, but what that meant they could not say. (Neuresthenia no longer seems a useful medical term and has disappeared with the stereopticon.) Although the Woolfs were aware of psychoanalysis and might discuss each other's flaws in the light of psychoanalysis, Virginia did not consider turning to an analyst for therapy, probably because she conceived of her illness as one of the nervous system and not of the psyche. Under Leonard's supervision, her life was rigidly structured to avoid the fatigue which, in the view of her doctors, provoked her insanity. She wrote only three hours a day, from 10 to 1, although she spent much of the afternoon revising or typing up what she had written in the morning, also thinking about what she would write the next day. She rarely stayed up past eleven, and social life, which she liked as the other pole of her solitude, in the same systole-diastole way she liked everything else, was strictly rationed. At the least sign of fatigue or headache she had to stop work and take to her bed. Louie Mayer was astonished at the way every hour was accounted for in the Woolfs' routine. Regular, disciplined, Virginia took little time off on weekends and gave herself only two-week vacations, although their moving back and forth between London and the country was a perpetual tonic. Illness was her unscheduled, unchosen rest from her labors. Whole months dropped out of her life, months which healthier, more fortunate people might spend swimming or sunning in the South, but which she spent in bed, in paroxysms of fear and self-hatred.

She never blamed her poor health for the limitations on her life. Nevertheless, if she envied her brothers their Oxbridge experience, she envied her sister her children and lovers. She envied Katherine Mansfield her travel and adventures. She envied Vita Sackville-West her disregard for convention. Thinking of Colette, who had danced in music halls, made her feel dowdy. We have to remember that if Woolf was confined to a life of letters, of mediated experience, other women of her time were not. There was, in fact, more to it than the evil power of patriarchy, but her physical and mental frailty played a restrictive part she chose never to incorporate in the myth of her own life. Her

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tendency to madness was acknowledged, but only as a nuisance one had to cope with, rather like chronic hay fever. If this was self-deception, it was a useful, strategic self-deception which enabled her to live a productive life. One can fight external social conditions and the fight may be profitable to others. One can't fight—or couldn't in the years before the war—a metabolic predisposition to psychosis. Far from considering her madness the source of her deprivations, she considered it her chief compensation, giving her access to an underworld of experience even more remote from the tea tables of Britain than were the dance halls of France or the brothels of Germany. It was her ticket to chaos, her passport out of the stranglehold of ordinary perception. As epilepsy was for Dostoevsky, madness was for Woolf a quasi-religious experience, which released her from the realm of the merely rational and initiated her into the sources of awe.

I would give a great deal to know what her hallucinations in madness were like. When the Devil appeared to Virginia Woolf, what shape did he take? In addition to passages in *The Voyage Out* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, there are glimpses, frustratingly meager. The doctors and nurses were in a conspiracy against her. Her mother was in the bedroom talking to her. The birds sang to her in Greek. King Edward shouted obscenities, naked in the rhododendrons.

Doctors and nurses engaged in persecution, using magical, scientific, or secret means to interfere with the patient's body and mind, is a typical delusion of mental patients, but surely only Virginia Woolf in her madness heard the birds singing in Greek. It seems a benign enough delusion, almost comical, yet we know it must have appeared to Woolf sinister, threatening, and horrific. Were the Greek-speaking birds a kind of cabal, a cultural set, a Cambridge-educated aviary from which she was excluded and which was mocking her? With the king, the very symbol of patriarchal authority, the potential for threat—the threat of male lust and male power—is clearer. It seems that the obsession with patriarchal tyranny which gave shape and meaning to her conscious life penetrated her unconscious as well. But what was her mother saying on that horrible morning in 1915 when Virginia suddenly saw her by her bedside and began a nonstop response? Was she accusing her of having wished her death? Was Virginia defending herself? We know that to avoid hearing these voices, Virginia Woolf structured her life and finally killed herself.

Yet madness taught her to know the self, in alienation and in terror, and it taught her to observe, with sensuous apprehension, the passing moment, unconnected to other moments, leading nowhere, but ballooning palpably into a space to be explored. If time becomes

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architectonic in the modern novel, it often does in hallucinations as well, and in this way, as in so many others, Woolf arrived by a unique route, based on her own experience, to join in the artistic revolution early in this century. Without glamorizing her madness, we may say that it was more valuable an education than the one she so much regretted.

If Woolf's life and work have relevance to many who are not manic-depressives, born to culture, terrified of life, it is because she was not as unique as she often thought and sometimes feared she was, because her fears speak to other people's fears, because her sense of life's important points, its delights and crises, corresponds with theirs, because she speaks for a class and not for herself alone, and finally because she successfully transformed her life into a life of letters which anyone may read.

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BOOKS

THE STATE OF SOCIAL THEORY

THE RESTRUCTURING OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THEORY. By Richard J. Bernstein. Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd. £9.50p.

This interesting and important book shows the same virtues as those displayed in the same author's earlier *Praxis and Action.* In that work Bernstein showed himself to be a rarity among Anglo-American philosophers, capable of connecting previously discrete themes in social theory and philosophy, and of spanning the distance between English-speaking and Continental traditions of thought. He now brings these abilities to bear upon issues of epistemology and method in the social sciences, offering a wide-ranging discussion that extends from orthodox sociology and political science, or what he called "mainstream social science," through the post-Wittgensteinian theory of action, Kuhn's philosophy of natural science, Schutz's phenomenology, and Habermas's version of critical theory.

It has become common to acknowledge that the social sciences today display a dazzling heterogeneity of theoretical perspectives, apparently the result of the collapse of the modes of thought that had achieved an ascendancy in the 1950s and 1960s. Some have greeted the emergence of this kaleidoscope of influences with enthusiasm, others with despair. Bernstein's response is a different one: that the present stage of development in the social sciences both poses the demand, and provides the opportunity, for the reconstruction of social and political theory. He begins by attempting to characterize the main themes of mainstream social science, admitting that this is only an inadequate label, but giving it flesh by concentrating his analysis upon a limited number of highly influential writings in American sociology, especially those of Merton, Smelser, and Homans. The views of these authors differ considerably, but nevertheless express certain common

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emphases, traceable to their acceptance of positivistic outlook. They all hold that natural science provides models of procedures that can and should be closely followed by the social sciences; that if the social sciences have not yet produced an accumulated body of substantiated and precisely formulated laws, this is because they are only in the initial stages of their developement, as compared to natural science; that "normative theory" can be clearly separated from the findings of empirical social science, with the latter standing in a purely instrumental relation to the former. These ideas underpin the type of approach which dominated sociology until quite recently, and even now remains an orthodoxy. But it has failed, in its own terms, to deliver the goods and looks increasingly weak as a framework for sociological method. There is not a corpus of tried and tested theories, accepted by everyone; and "normative theory" persistently intrudes into the sphere of the empirical, however carefully we may seek to keep them distinct. "Despite all the talk of objectivity and value neutrality," Bernstein says, "social science literature and so-called empirical theory are shot through with explicit and implicit value judgments, and controversial normative and ideological claims."

When we look at alternatives to mainstream social science, we find some major convergences of opinion about what its shortcomings are, and about the kind of standpoint that should be put in the stead of positivistic or naturalistic social theory. Such a standpoint has to be sensitive to issues of language analysis and the interpretation of action, to the interconnection of theoretical analysis and moral evaluation, and to the basic changes which have happened in the philosophy of natural science. Bernstein provides a good survey of the writings of Winch and Louch, and of the critiques to which these have been subject. Certain elements in the work of these writers, he considers (agreeing with Taylor, MacIntyre and others) are very important, but their views are stated in too extreme and dogmatic a fashion—a consequence in some part of the polemical context in which they were produced. Their ideas can be complemented usefully by others drawn from Schutz's phenomenology, although this again has very definite limitations. Bernstein also discusses at some length the relevance of Kuhn's work to the social sciences. Whatever the usefulness of the notoriously ambiguous term "paradigm" in the philosophy of natural science, it has consistently been misapplied, he shows, in the social sciences—most conspicuously by writers in the mainstream tradition, who have appropriated it to their own ends. The book concludes with a lengthy discussion of Habermas, who Bernstein believes has contributed most to reworking of the issues with which social and political

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theory has to be concerned today. He discusses only certain aspects of Habermas's works, but this part of the book offers a clear and cogent summary of Habermas's contributions to problems of epistemology and method—although Bernstein does not pay sufficient attention to *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften*, in which Habermas explicitly traced through several of the themes that are prominent in Bernstein's own study.

This is an impressive work, and I am personally very sympathetic to the arguments that it presents. It remains however something of an hors d'oeuvre that lacks a main course. Bernstein makes it apparent that he does not believe that Habermas has all the answers to the problems that are posed in the contemporary phase of development of the social sciences, but he does not set out his own views in any detail.

ANTHONY GIDDENS

REMEMBERING RANSOM

GENTLEMAN IN A DUSTCOAT, A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN CROWE RANSOM. By Thomas Daniel Young. Louisiana State University Press. $8.95.

One day, for reasons I can't remember, John Ransom was telling me about an autobiography a local industrialist—a self-made man—was in the process of writing. Somehow, in the course of the talk, I asked him the title of the proposed book. With a slight smile and relishing every word, he said, "Well, I'm afraid he calls it, *Up From Mudville*." I thought of that incident when I first saw the title of Thomas Daniel Young's biography and imagined that Ransom, sitting in the book-lined study in Heaven, where he most surely is, must have smiled the same smile.

The title, *Gentleman in a Dustcoat*, comes from one of Ransom's finest and most characteristic poems. Some of his poetry is not ironic but I suspect irony was his first instinct, and this example probably would have charmed him. "Piazza Piece" is about a beautiful young lady who stands on her trellised porch waiting for her lover. Suddenly, the roses are dying and, through the vines, she sees an old gentleman in

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a dustcoat who is trying to make her listen to him: "But what grey man among the vines is this / Whose words are dry and faint as in a dream? / Back from my trellis, Sir, before I scream!"

This is Ransom's *memento mori* poem, of course, and the gentleman in the dustcoat is Death. John Ransom, on the other hand, was one of the most thoroughly alive men I've ever known. He was constantly speculating, continually turning over fresh ideas, always revising his thought and was usually in the process of planning some new venture. He became an exceptional poet, a first-rank literary critic, a distinguished editor, and one of the great teachers of his time in this country. To equate him with that figure of dusty death in his poem is absurd.

I make such a point of the title because it seems to me to show a misapprehension of Ransom that runs through this scholarly, kindly, intelligent, overlong biography. Much of the book, for instance, is a sort of family album affair—sketches of Ransom's grandfather and father; chronicles of trips, vacations, interim teaching jobs; details of English Department affairs at Vanderbilt. The memorabilia of our close friends is interesting to us, of course, but it is not meant for strangers. Particularly in Ransom's case, a lifetime's memorabilia has almost no bearing on the real thought and accomplishment. He was a preacher's son who studied at Vanderbilt and Oxford, was a behind-the-lines instructor in World War I, taught for many years at Vanderbilt and at Kenyon and had a rewarding family life—a worthy history but not an uncommon one.

Even in the anecdotes-and-trivia part of the book, Mr. Young misses a lot that would characterize his subject. Ransom's ironic kind of humor, for example. At one period (in the late 30s and 40s) he was often invited to address ladies' literary clubs on the subject of poetry. At that time, in those circles, Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" and similar verse were regarded as the finest flowers of modern poesy. Before these clubs, Ransom would give a completely deadpan but hilarious texture-and-structure analysis of "Trees," pretending that it was, indeed, worthy of the intense scrutiny one might apply to Shakespeare, but ending up by stripping it, leaf by artificial leaf. He enjoyed the consternation that caused, much as he later enjoyed the consternation of university professors when, in effect, he pointed out the enormous irrelevance they brought to bear in their study of literature.

For me, Ransom is first of all a poet. I discovered him one day when I was a freshman at Olivet College and I was startled and entranced. Even though I had no ambitions to be a poet, it seemed clear that the only thing I wanted to do was to enter Kenyon to study under a

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man who wrote such verse. Rereading it now, much later, I find a good deal of it impossible to like—the studied quaintness, the pawky humor, the deliberately awkward phrasing in places, the knights-and-ladies pretenses. (And Ransom, himself, had similar feelings; he constantly revised the best of his older poems and the 1945 edition of his *Selected Poems*—his best book, I think—contained only forty-two of the 154 poems he wrote during his life.) But the best of them are, as Randall Jarrell said, "poems that are perfectly realized and occasionally almost perfect." "Blue Girls," "The Equilibrists," "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter," "Dead Boy," "Captain Carpenter," "Here Lies A Lady," and perhaps a dozen more are ironic, elegiac wonders that hold their chill beauty as fresh as ever.

Since most younger poets and readers—at least the ones I know—think of Ransom as a page or two in an anthology, this would seem a good occasion for his biographer to offer a critical definition of the poetry. Mr. Young doesn't offer it. He is much better—excellent, in fact—at tracing the development of Ransom's critical and aesthetic ideas through his earliest essays and his three books of criticism, *The World's Body, The New Criticism,* and *Beating the Bushes.* There are valuable summaries here for anyone who wishes to understand the course of Ransom's thoughts. But, again, one feels Young's lack of analytical judgment at crucial points. For instance Ransom based his poetic theory on an opposition with science. He simply confused science with technology, saying, "The scientist studies nature only to bring it under control, to put it to some practical use." Whereas, in contrast, "the artist attempts to imitate nature, to make full and complete representations." To me, one of Ransom's great faults as an aesthetic theoretician is the fact that he could not imagine other kinds of imagination. And, just as he failed to conceive the real creativity in science, in cosmology, for example, he had troubles with the visual arts and with music. When he talked about art and the artist, he was actually speaking of poetry and the poet and, ontology aside, he was a fine critic of one art alone.

When I made that impulsive decision to go to Kenyon to study under Ransom, I was much wiser than I knew or had any right to be. I can think of only one other teacher of literature at that time who would have been comparable and that is Lionel Trilling. One of the few ways we have of judging a teacher's accomplishment is by the students he has attracted and inspired and Ransom's class-roll throughout the years was remarkable. There were Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Randall Jarrell, Robert Lowell, Peter Taylor, Cleanth Brooks, James Wright, Anthony Hecht, and E.L. Doctorow, to name just a few. What was it that made Ransom such a great teacher? I wish that Mr. Young

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had devoted more than a few rather perfunctory pages to this question because I'm still not sure, in any systematic way, of the answer.

In class, Ransom was quiet and informal. His method of teaching was conversational. He often seemed to have worried over his subject rather than preparing any orderly, professorial talk about it. He would share his worries with the class, revising his opinions, pursuing some speculation and then discarding it, doing a bit of rewriting on the author's work, almost never coming to any conclusion that could be recorded in a notebook for use on the exam. Sometimes I was irked or bored—especially when he was teaching fiction, for which he had little respect. He enjoyed the stories in *The Saturday Evening Post* and sometimes would read one aloud from beginning to end as we squirmed or dozed.

It was only after class was over—sometimes long after—that two or three things he'd said would suddenly recur as absolutely original and illuminating *aperçus*. As often as not, they were about something that had no ostensible connection with his given subject—a point about Aristotle when he was supposed to be talking about Browning, perhaps. But they did that astonishing thing that few teachers ever accomplish: they changed our minds.

I suppose that this has something to do with my major reservation about Mr. Young's biography—so much of it is about the life of a very good but ordinary man; the extraordinary man gets obscured. As I read *Gentleman in a Dustcoat*, I found myself putting it down impatiently and turning to *The World's Body* or the *Selected Poems* or listening to the record of Ransom reading his poems. Or simply remembering a lot of things that don't appear in the book. None of *these* brings back a recollection of an elderly, dustcoated gentleman whose words were dry and faint as in a dream.

ROBIE MACAULEY

CHOMSKY'S STRUCTURES

REFLECTIONS ON LANGUAGE. By Noam Chomsky. Pantheon. $3.95.

Chomsky sketches a program for cognitive psychology, a program based on his work in linguistics and relying heavily on the obscure notion of a "cognitive structure." In Chomsky's view the

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grammar of a language specifies one such cognitive structure. Others include physical science, common sense, and the principles that enable a person to recognize faces. Although people act as they do at least partly because of the cognitive structures they possess, Chomsky believes there is no real prospect for a theory that would account for this, which he thinks will probably remain a mystery forever. But psychologists can try to characterize various cognitive structures, just as linguists have characterized the grammars of various languages, and they can study the ways in which conceptual structures are acquired.

Chomsky argues that different conceptual structures are acquired in different ways. Specific aspects of a given conceptual structure may be innate and unlearned. For example, much of the visual system is apparently "wired in" ahead of time. Spatial perception is not learned but innate. We might expect that our recognition of faces similarly depends upon an innate schema of faces. And Chomsky explains at length why there is reason to suppose that language learning involves filling in an innate grammatical schematism. Language learning is not simply the application of general intelligence to the learning of language but involves a specific faculty of language.

In Chomsky's view, there is no interesting general theory of learning. Different cognitive structures are learned or acquired in different ways. So-called learning theory in psychology has been entirely concerned with the uninteresting marginal cases of learning which do not depend on specific schemata but must proceed by trial and error.

Chomsky goes on to suggest that the development of science depends on a specific science faculty, an innate schema for scientific theories. This makes science possible but it also means there are important limits to science, since there is no evolutionary reason for the science faculty to be suited to the discovery and understanding of every aspect of reality. We may, for example, never be able to develop a significant science that would account for human behavior.

We are specifically "designed" for some tasks, such as language learning. Other tasks are beyond our cognitive capacity—perhaps the task of developing a theory that would account for actual human behavior is an example. Problems at the border of cognitive capacity, like those involved in chess, "will provide opportunity for intriguing intellectual play. . . . Here we would expect to find that the slight differences between individuals are magnified to striking divergence of attitude." Chomsky adds,

> As creative minds approach the limits of cognitive capacity, not only will the act of creation be limited to a talented few, but even the

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> appreciation or comprehension of what has been created. If cognitive domains are roughly comparable in complexity and potential scope, such limits might be approached at more or less the same time in various domains, giving rise to a 'crisis of modernism,' marked by a sharp decline in the general accessibility of the products of creative minds, a blurring of the distinction between art and puzzle, and a sharp increase in 'professionalism' in intellectual life, affecting not only those who produce creative work but also its potential audience. Mockery of conventions that are, ultimately, grounded in human cognitive capacity might be expected to become virtually an art form in itself, at this stage of cultural evolution. It may be that something of this sort has been happening in recent history.

Although this is obviously an interesting subject, Chomsky does not think that a scientific study of the border of cognitive capacity will at present tell us much about human intelligence. "It is good procedure to study major factors before turning to tenth order effects."

These speculations are based almost entirely on Chomsky's work in linguistics, so he might be accused of over-generalizing from one example. On the other hand, his remarks do have a foundation in empirical science. His procedure must be distinguished from that involved in structuralism. Chomsky projects into other areas methodological ideas that have proved themselves in linguistics. Structuralism projects ideas that have not even worked in linguistics.

For Chomsky, the grammar of a language is a complex system of rules. Base rules specify certain "initial structures." Transformational rules transform these into surface structures. Phonological rules determine how surface structures sound. Semantic interpretation rules say what surface structures mean. These rules are subject to rigorous constraints, limiting their form, ordering them in relation to each other, restricting what they can do. Furthermore, the grammar also makes reference to other conceptual systems, such as the system of common sense, and interacts with these other systems in complex ways. This complexity is not an objection, Chomsky argues: "the idea that the system of cognitive structures must be far more simple than the little finger does not have much to recommend it."

Chomsky's discussion of grammar makes important modifications in the theory he has previously stated. He now abandons the term "deep structure," which his earlier work had made famous, using instead the term "initial structure." This is partly because the term "deep structure" suggested misleadingly that deep structure reveals what is truly deep about language. The change in terminology also marks a change in doctrine, since Chomsky now holds that semantic interpretation rules do not apply at all to deep or initial structures but apply instead directly to "enriched" surface structures.

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Chomsky argues that it is the various constraints on rules that reveal what is truly deep about language and he discusses several interesting proposals about these constraints. The constraints are not learned, he argues. For example, children never make mistakes involving violations of constraints. The constraints must therefore be part of the innate schema for language, which means that the same constraints will apply to the rules of whatever grammar the child develops. It follows that a study of the rules of one language can reveal something about all languages, since the constraints needed on the rules of the one language will be constraints on the rules of any language.

Chomsky shows that his critics have not always appreciated the force of this argument. In their defense it might be said that he has never before presented the argument as clearly as in this book.

GILBERT HARMAN

THE TEXT OF A LIFE

THE PLEASURE OF THE TEXT. By Roland Barthes. Translated by Richard Miller. Hill and Wang. $5.95.

ROLAND BARTHES. By Roland Barthes. Translated by Richard Howard. Hill and Wang. $4.95.

Sartre suggested in his autobiography that he owed the originality and self-confidence of his intellectual career to the early death of his father, a naval officer. "There are no good fathers, that's the rule," he proclaimed; as the only child of a doting mother he could grow up free and "without a Super-Ego." Roland Barthes is now almost as famous a rebel in France, though in a very different style; so it is intriguing to learn from his autobiography that his family history is almost identical to Sartre's. Though Barthes' political position is now far removed from Sartre's still militant activism, he made his intellectual debut as a leftist with *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), notable for its sophisticated Marxist defence of modernism against socialist realism. Then, at about the age of fifty, he upset the applecart of traditional

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French literary criticism with *Sur Racine* (1963) and *Essais Critiques* (1964); these were bitterly denounced by Raymond Picard in *Nouvelle Critique où Nouvelle Imposture?* and defended by their author in *Critique et Verité* (1966). Barthes' mode of literary exegesis, based on a radical anachronism and subjectivism, has by now been widely accepted in France, though in the English-speaking countries critics are just taking the first steps towards accepting and applying its premises. His recent works show him making yet another leap of self-transcendence, claiming an absolute interpretive freedom in the name of a "pleasure of the text" not to be subdued by any orthodoxy; this would again provide grounds for scandal were it not that Barthes himself has over the past twenty years so widened the scope of literary studies that few French critics would still presume to set any limits to discourse about writing.

Barthes' academic career has not been smooth or regular, though its vagaries have contributed to his extraordinary diversity of intellectual interest and achievement. Normally he would no doubt have made a brilliant progress through the successive levels of the French educational hierarchy, but in 1934, at the age of nineteen, he suffered a tubercular lesion. For the next thirteen years he was in and out of sanitariums. As an invalid he could not be directly involved in the supreme moral test of the Occupation. After the war he taught in Rumania and Egypt, was a cultural bureaucrat and a research associate in sociology; not until 1960 did he settle into a prestigious appointment at the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* in Paris, where he has since remained, nominally as a sociologist. His contributions in popular culture, semiology, and structuralism can scarcely be encompassed in a brief review so I will comment only on what he has said about literary theory in three recent works: the two under review and *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (1971). These mark a definite new phase in his work, a quest for what is irreducibly personal in his literary responses and a corresponding devaluation of the earlier influences of Marxism and Saussurean linguistics. They assert a hedonism of language that supplies both a critical method and a moral ground for Barthes' particular critical vocation.

It is in the preface to *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* that Barthes first argues his belief that the "text" is not an intellectual object but an object of pleasure. Not all literary works, one must explain, are defined as texts: only those that lend themselves to the protean transformations and decodings that Barthes and his followers delight in. Traditional literary critics, if they should ever mention Sade, Fourier, and Loyola in one breath, would assume that the aristocratic immoralist, the

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socialist dreaming of secular perfection, and the ascetic Jesuit represent contradictory world-views. But Barthes cares only for what they have in common: that all have created distinct languages and systems of ordering the world. By immersing himself in these idiosyncratic visions he achieves a kind of fetishistic enjoyment that owes nothing to the actual contents of their works. Nor would it be worthwhile, Barthes argues, to attempt any critique of the three authors' social doctrines; why enter a struggle with bourgeois ideology that would be compromised from the start—since that ideology already permeates all aspects of language, including the language of protest against it? All we can hope to do, therefore, is to expropriate the classic texts of our culture for our personal pleasure and "disguise them as one does stolen goods." Indeed, Barthes would seem to attribute a special value to distorting the accepted meaning of a text. Where the orthodox critic invokes some objective standard of fidelity to a work, Barthes encourages the reader to "kidnap" it, to take pleasure in assimilating it into his private text of fantasy and desire.

Barthes also believes in taking liberties with the form of the critical text itself. *The Pleasure of the Text* is strung together from a series of meditations which range in length from a paragraph to a few pages and are set in alphabetical order according to some key word in each. In *Roland Barthes* one would expect a shift to chronological narrative but the same system is used, as if to emphasize wittily the supremacy of the linguistic code over the anecdotes that comprise a life. Who but Barthes would think of presenting his autobiography in alphabetical order? The other organizing principle is the radical change in the portrayal of Barthes' life before and after he becomes a writer. In the first section he meditates on images of his mother, of his family, of Bayonne (where he grew up); these are the clues to the lost world of his youth which he can no longer know or even understand. Then come the rites of passage that precede his vocation as a writer: his long confinement in sanitariums, and his becoming a disciple of André Gide. But these stages are given only the most cursory mention. We must fill in for ourselves the possible influence of invalidism on Barthes' development, or that of Gide's fascination with the perverse, the stolen, and the counterfeit. The last and longest part of the book omits all the traditional signposts of autobiography. For Barthes, the writer's life is essentially gratuitous—a free play of thought, not confined by time or space but by language, the medium he inhabits. There are no more images of people or places but only of the medium itself: pictures of documents, doodles, handwriting samples. Language, he argues, should be the

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realm of play, fantasy, invention—a belief displayed, not to say flaunted, in the extraordinary rococo preciousness of his style, thickly ornamented with recondite jargon and words ingeniously coined. In *The Pleasure of the Text* the enemies of such an untrammeled discourse are the two "policemen" of French intellectual life, orthodox Marxism and Freudianism. In *Roland Barthes* they are referred to as Science, Militancy, and *Doxa* (Barthes' term for "the petit-bourgeois consensus"). He defines "perversion" as a pleasurable evasion of these three censors. His examples are homosexuality and hashish, but one might also cite the more rarefied pleasures of intellectual dislocations and incongruities. Thus criticism emulates the pose of the dandy. (Richard Miller's translation of *The Pleasure of the Text* conveys more of the peculiar charm of Barthes' prose than Richard Howard's workmanlike but occasionally stiff or imprecise version of *Roland Barthes*. The latter also omits the original's useful bibliography and table of contents; and it replaces Barthes' abstract cover with a photograph of him—thus falsely implying that the book is an iconic portrait or revelation of its author.)

In the English-speaking world the emphasis in literary theory has been moving away from the objective and canonical work towards the immediate experience of the person reading it. But critics of this persuasion must satisfy conflicting impulses; at the same time, they desire to give a complete and spontaneous account of their responses to the text and to reconcile this account with some system capable of conferring order and cogency on their literary experience. Most commonly, the system has been Freudian. Barthes tried to straddle a similar dilemma in the works of his middle period, but he relied on a structuralist rather than a psychoanalytic model; his commentaries on literary texts—*S/Z* is an extreme example—combined a highly arbitrary content with a rigorously structured form (this made them particularly repellent to the typical Anglo-Saxon, along with many similar manifestations of French structuralism). His recent works, however, strongly assert wilfulness and spontaneity at the expense of structure, which now appears as the enemy of pleasure. Marxism is virtually discarded, psychoanalysis admitted only as a "fiction" that gives one license to play or to dream; when proposed as Law it must be flouted in the name of "the pleasure of the text."

Barthes' criticism, therefore, is no longer an analysis but a performance. It justifies itself by its linguistic inventiveness and by the subtlety of its literary associations, not by any "fidelity" to the work or by the interpretive power of any set moral or psychological scheme.

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One might say that Barthes aspires to astonish and to be inimitable, and that, being a writer of formidable gifts, he often succeeds. He also discomforts his readers by his implicit challenge to do the same and to rival him in dandyism, for, in the English-speaking world, literary critics have been in reaction against the cult of personality and "fine writing" for most of this century. Not only are we told by Barthes that it is our duty to invent new meanings for classic texts, to "see what could be done with [them]," but we are asked to invent and reinvent our own subjectivity too. The first words of *Roland Barthes* are: "All this must be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel." The critics of our generation, Barthes implies, have defined and charted the realm of literary modernism, where "all that is solid melts in the air." Now it is time for them to reproduce in their own texts the forms and sensibilities of the fictions that they have made canonical as the authentic expressions of the age.

PAUL DELANY

FATHERS AND SONS

A BOOK OF DREAMS. By Peter Reich. Harper & Row.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF MY FATHER. By Paul Spike. Alfred A. Knopf.

KENTUCKY HAM. By William Burroughs, Jr. E. P. Dutton.

Wilhelm Reich's career in the United States has in it all the dramatic features of the Frankenstein legend: a remote laboratory in the forest, strange mechanical devices, suspicious townspeople, puzzled constables, Reich himself in his smock speaking in heavily accented English while fiddling with the dials of his infernal machines, and last but not least, an avenging hero in the clean-cut person of the FDA who comes finally to burn down and purge the bad business of Promethean science. This is, of course, a cartoon version of Reich's last years, the FDA's scenario, and it is credible only to those who ignore the considerable breadth of insight and hypothesis contained in Reich's investigation of orgone energy. Yet it is this image of Reich as the mad scientist which his son, Peter, most powerfully evokes in his memoir, *A*

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Book of Dreams. Here indeed is the Reich who shot down flying saucers, who concocted a curiously Manichean vision of universal strife, who pulled his son within these fantasies and turned him ironically into a heavily armored, deeply disturbed soldier in his own private army. Not long after his father's death in the Lewisburg prison, young Reich happens to see the science fiction film, *The Fly*, and in its grotesque plot (a scientist experimenting with molecular transmutation ends up with the head of a housefly) the outline of his family life suddenly looms before him. "Right there in the movie, people were laughing at how incredible *The Fly* was when sitting right there in the middle of the crowd was someone who had been through something like that and it was real." But how real is this perception of Reich's unhappy fate? Having for a moment risked a point of view and clearly stated that he is the son of Dr. Frankenstein who grew up as an actor inside a horror film, Peter Reich immediately deflects the validity of that feeling and blurs its implicit accusation. "Reich was insane, they said. But who was to judge? Did flying saucers actually chase Apollo, our astronaut-heroes, streaking toward the moon?" The question of Reich's science, whether it is valid or simply hocus-pocus, disguised art, and therefore dangerous science, is left as a question in *A Book of Dreams*. So, too, necessarily, is Wilhelm Reich's own sense of himself as a martyr, the modern Giordano Bruno. Except as an overwhelming presence, an omniscient voice, Reich remains outside his son's baffled purview.

The problem with *A Book of Dreams*, then, is that its writer has not yet disentangled himself from its underlying bad dream—this terrifying vision of the father's other face with its all-seeing eyes and clutching mandibles. The result is a narrative so constrained in its taut ambivalence that it must perforce exist in fragments, leap back and forth in time, always move in order to evade conclusions. Reich's dreams are used to snatch up anecdotes and create moods; they do not lead toward revelation and understanding. Dusan Makavejev's *WR: The Mysteries of the Organism* is mentioned, young Reich imagines the kind of film he would make (principally of the landscape at Orgonon), but we never learn what he thought of Makavejev's ingenious film. The Oranur episode, where one of Reich's experiments with radium went dangerously astray, is dimly remembered, not understood. Reich's own explanations and ideas are typically presented in the simplistic form of paternal advice—as though this were the only Reich to which the son had access. Frozen to his childish view of Wilhelm Reich and either unwilling or unable to probe his father's work, Peter Reich has finally little to say or record in this book, except to trace

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confusedly his own Icarian tumble. Given the plots and complots that enmeshed Reich in his last few years and the many separations of father and son, the mistiness of the elder Reich's figure in *A Book of Dreams* is perhaps understandable. It is also true, however, that by the close of Peter Reich's narrative we know even less of the son than we did of the father.

Unfortunately much the same can be said of Paul Spike's *Photographs of My Father*. The murder of the Reverend Robert W. Spike in a Columbus motel, in its way as portentous as Reich's death in a federal prison, is the enigma Paul Spike anxiously circles in his book and finally fails to resolve. Here, too, the duplicity of the father, the public and private man, is an issue that confounds the son. Was the elder Spike bludgeoned to death by a male prostitute in 1966 or simply executed by some dark and hidden arm of the federal government, eliminated by an administration forcefully pushed in its civil rights policy by Robert Spike? This same question, obscured by a steady rain of rhetorical pleas for understanding, repeats itself in different terms throughout *A Book of Dreams*. Was Wilhelm Reich sane, a clairvoyant revolutionary persecuted by a fearful government, or did he crazily place himself in jail, create the harassment that ultimately killed him? In both books, faced with the father's dubious martyrdom and torn between the conflicting demands of elegy and analysis, the questioner has an unenviable task. But in Spike's task, the asking of the question, which he does at great length, is something of a diversion.

The two Spikes stand at either end of a single generation in American political life. There is an exemplary photograph of the elder Spike marching with grim sobriety beside John Lewis in a Mississippi demonstration and much later in the text another of Paul Spike attacking a steel fence at Columbia University. Between these two events a good deal of painful history obviously flows—and yet its cumulative effect on both men is not significantly considered. Young Spike grows up in the fashion of Holden Caulfield, *triste*, while Reverend Spike relentlessly pursues the cause of racial justice. Their lives are separate, the one out of Sherwood Anderson (as Paul Spike tells it), the other out of J. D. Salinger, and the only thing they seem really ever to share is the couch in a Dr. Shapiro's office. One thing else: crystalline American innocence.

The extracts from Robert Spike's *To Be A Man* and Paul Spike's reflections on his father's death (which give a nod to Camus) are striking in their earnest, almost desperate idealism. What Paul Spike ostensibly learns from his father at the end of the book is trust, trust in

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the "feeling" Robert Spike called "God." Trust, though not necessarily in God or Feeling, is what *Photographs of My Father* is ultimately about. It is trust that young Spike all along has striven to preserve in his narrative, trust not only in his own shaken self, but trust in his father's sincerity, the truth that, whatever the cause of his death, Robert Spike was nonetheless what he professed to be. Yet innocence has a low tolerance and the book's burden of stress leans heavily on Paul Spike's. The sentence on which the narrative ends: "Father, I do not understand your death," purports in its context to be a statement of the Absurd, but in another sense it merely returns its writer, still hurtfully perplexed, to the scene of the crime. And the mystery there is not Robert Spike's bisexuality, but the convergence of forces that drove him to this particular end. The federal government had its file on Spike's erotic life just as it had a file on Martin Luther King's, both of whom it presumably regarded as perverse hypocrites. What is lacking in *Photographs of My Father* is precisely this wider focus, an enlargement that would reveal not just the trail of Robert Spike's career but the whole violent measure of his world.

In *Kentucky Ham,* which is thickly sliced and half-baked, William Burroughs, Jr. has none of the problems that afflict Peter Reich and Paul Spike. Burroughs tells the tale of his first important bust. He does a stint at Lexington (he is escorted there by his celebrated father) and then is paroled to the Alaskan wilderness where he learns the redeeming discipline of hard labor. Like his father, whose quick, bracing style he badly imitates, Burroughs has useful knowledge to impart and old scores with the Cop and the Judge to settle. But the tough brilliance of *Naked Lunch,* that vivid sense of experience aged in bitter solutions, is an achievement *Kentucky Ham* can only burlesque. "Want to lick the drug problem?" young Burroughs asks. "Make it legal." The useful knowledge imparted in *Kentucky Ham* rarely surmounts this dead level and the wisecrack, which the elder Burroughs elevated to the stature of epigram, is here abruptly restored to the status of mere rejoinder. Indeed *Kentucky Ham* shamelessly rifles the store in *Naked Lunch* and disfigures the goods. "The final and only decisive step in drug release," Burroughs solemnly reports, "is a massive change in consciousness that affects the whole identity and all its sensory capacities." If one removes from the text the anecdote of Burroughs's sojourn in Tangier with his father (which appeared earlier in *Esquire*), not much in the way of either amusement or instruction remains. Near the end of the book Burroughs begins to run out of narrative and his hitherto covert padding becomes so explicit that it can no longer be

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denied. Where's his story-line? Editorial deadlines impend. "Big deal you say," he declares, "but it's a hassle for me because I got responsibilities to the big guys. They pay me my advance and I better come across with my pound of concepts, right?" Where *Kentucky Ham* is not simply embarrassing in its arrogant superficiality, it is simply distasteful.

NEIL SCHMITZ

THE USES OF ANALYSIS

THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT: THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF FAIRY TALES. By Bruno Bettelheim. Alfred A. Knopf. $12.50.

In his beautifully titled book *The Uses of Enchantment* Dr. Bruno Bettelheim applies "the insights of depth analysis to our favorite fairy tales." He discovers once again, that poets say what they didn't know they knew and proves that the tellers of these ancient stories have "given body in symbolic form" to their, and our, psychological processes. Dr. Bettelheim argues persuasively that children unconsciously understand this unconscious content, and that they are deeply and essentially benefited by it but Dr. Bettelheim may fail to convince us of the claim, implied by his subtitle, that *this* is "The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales."

Where the poet's figure meets the psychiatrist's language in mid-sentence the effect can seem funny in a charming, or in a silly way, for instance: "Internally, the pigs' actions show progress from the id-dominated personality to the super-ego controlled personality [but] only the third and oldest pig has learned to behave in accordance with the reality principle." Or: "The blood oozing out of [Cinderella's] slippers is but another symbolic equation of slipper-vagina bleeding as in menstruation." Dr. Bettelheim says that the prince's failure to notice the blood at first points to his castration anxiety.

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The fun is incidental, and what seems silly may point, we're ready to be told—and to believe—to our own resistance. It is certain that Dr. Bettelheim's interpretations enlighten, and also, I believe, endanger our understanding of fairy tales.

It is fascinating to learn how to read "The Three Little Pigs" as three stages of the psyche en route to maturity, and the big bad wolf as the animal aspect of human nature which must be subdued. "Cinderella," says Dr. Bettelheim, "teaches" the child that she must survive sibling rivalry and overcome the "oedipal hurdle" so that she can marry the prince, i.e., "form happy sexual relations . . . mutually satisfying and meaningful," and inherit the kingdom which means to rule wisely and well after her own emotions and body.

Dr. Bettelheim sees each story as "dealing with" a different phase of psychological growth: Hansel and Gretel's gingerbread house "represents" their oral regression and Jack's beanstalk "stands for" the magical super-phallus which he must cut down before he can master his real one. Only after successful passage through the successive crises of the primal predicament can the hero-child regain in the real world the lost fantasy paradise in which he dwelt with the good mother.

Dr. Bettelheim tells us what we must have known all along, that the fairy-godmother is the witch is the stepmother is the real mother all of whom coexist in the child's everyday experience. Fairy tales allow the child to hate, without guilt, the stepmother who suddenly, inexplicably, threatens, forbids, or disappears on an afternoon trip downtown abandoning the child as if in the darkest middle of the forest. He needs to punish the witch by rolling her downhill in a nail-studded barrel, without losing the mother he needs to cook his supper and tuck him into bed. In the world of fantasy only, he can kill her, and have her too.

Dr. Bettelheim warns against today's seemingly harmless, nonviolent, "relevant" children's literature. It either deals in the meager plausibilities which refuse to acknowledge the child's confusions, his "mortal anxiety," or interprets realistically what he may need to keep preconscious. Dr. Bettelheim suggests that it isn't the children, it's the parents who are afraid—who do not know how to use enchantment. He seems at times to be saying that our children may hardly make it to a healthy maturity without the aid of these profound fantasies on which they can ring their own changes according to need. They can choose not to understand what it would trouble them to know. Bettelheim writes movingly of the "consolation" in the fantastical promises which this last, least, this dumdum of the oedipal triangle understands to be true in the world of fairy only, but which he needs, as one needs the

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experience and hope of success in order to keep struggling toward what is possible.

One feels the benevolent, patient, urgent intelligence with which Dr. Bettelheim hopes for our children though one might wish he didn't use the language we know so well from the prospectuses of New York's progressive schools. They too promise "to enrich the child's life," to help him "realize his highest potential," to "achieve his true identity," and to help him or her "make a significant contribution to life."

These are the things we hope too, and we're glad to be reassured that fairy tales are good for us. But is this what makes fairy tales important? Is that what they are about?

Bettelheim quotes Schiller: "Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life." But Schiller's meaning is not synonymous with the interpretations of Dr. Bettelheim's discipline, nor that of any other system. The psychiatrist's explanation that it's "Little Red Cap's lingering oedipal attachment which exposes her to the seductions of the Wolf" is what Nabokov meant by "the shabby, vulgar, essentially medieval quest for sexual symbol." The anthropologist's version that Little Red Cap is the moon in eclipse, or another Persephone who will be reborn from the Wolf's belly in spring, made André Lang complain that this line of interpretation reduces every fairy tale to a comment about the weather.

Dr. Bettelheim takes care to mention that there are alternative explications, but his language, his verbs, try to bully us into believing that a fairy tale "stands for," "represents," "teaches," "exemplifies," "deals essentially with" what *he* says is its "message"—that he is telling us how "to grasp the story's deeper meaning correctly." Bettelheim says, and he may think he thinks, that "fairy tales are first and foremost works of art" but when he describes "Cinderella" as "camouflaging" its oedipal theme he lets it slip: he thinks of it as an artful therapeutic tool. He condemns pictorial illustrations because they come between the reader and the responses of his unconscious. But Dr. Bettelheim's explication of these unconscious responses comes more thoroughly between the reader and the free use of his or her understanding, not by Dr. Bettelheim's intention, nor by the logic of his argument, but by the power he has over our imaginations.

A lecture on prosody will pull a poem to pieces only till we forget what we have learned or internalized it to educate our reading. But the Freudian lesson is at once reductive and won't, once it gets in our heads, get out again. It is *too* fascinating, too "sexy." And, finally, it's

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too easy, once we've learned its application; it's too much fun. We tend to look no further.

Dr. Bettelheim says Antigone's fate "shows that over-intense sibling attachment is . . . fatal." If I argue that she buried her brother out of a piety which braved death, Dr. Bettelheim can always answer that the latter gives symbolic body to the former, and his meaning will always beat my meaning. Dr. Bettelheim says that "The Boy Who Went Forth to Study Fear . . . could not shudder due to repression of all sexual feelings," but in the text this boy's adventures are not with women nor any living flesh, only with the thieves on the gallows, with a dead cousin in a coffin and dozens of ghosts and spirits. I think he is a man minus imagination who cannot conceive of death. The story says he was cured by a bucket of river water full of little fishes which his wife poured over him in bed one night. I think the story is saying if you don't feel you'll have to make do with sensation. (If you can't grieve, peel an onion.) Dr. Bettelheim says the story is about sexual maturation which bludgeons the rare, delicate point and leaves only another sexual connotation.

"My tale is ended. There runs a mouse. Who catches it may make himself a big fur cap out of it," says the end of Hansel and Gretel. Dr. Bettelheim says it means "Industry making something good even out of unpromising material . . . is the virtue and real achievement of the school-age child who has . . . mastered the oedpial difficulties." Dr. Bettelheim has not heard the ironical and faintly bitter note which, I believe, means: That's enough magic for today. You and I know that ridding the world of its witches, and bringing home a load of treasure is about as likely as making a big cap out of a tiny little mouse which you can't catch in the first place.

Schiller's meaning is surely the serendipitous, open-ended kind that can include Dr. Bettelheim's "meaning" if Dr. Bettelheim's language can learn not to exclude everything else. Or it may be the reader's business to keep Dr. Bettelheim in his place by remembering that he illuminates only a part of the fairy tale which is neither the whole nor the heart of its mystery.

LORE SEGAL

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TV GUIDES

TUBE OF PLENTY: The Evolution of American Television. By Erik Barnouw. Oxford University Press. $14.95.

TELEVISION: Technology and Cultural Form. By Raymond Williams. Schocken Books. $3.45.

The history of communications is at last beginning to be studied seriously from quite different angles. These two books are as different in style and approach as any two books on the subject could be. Yet they are complementary and broadly speaking they point in the same direction.

Eric Barnouw's three-volume *History of Broadcasting in the United States* covered a great deal of ground in a well-informed and lively manner. The volumes were particularly interesting on politics and broadcasting, dealing at length with politics inside broadcasting and with the attitude of politicians towards broadcasting. This new single-volume history has the same virtues with a few new virtues added. Compression has sharpened some of the points: events since 1970, where the third volume ended, have changed the perspectives. The narrative always maintains an element of suspense. What could be more telling than punch-lines at the end of subchapters—usually also well-placed at the end of pages—like "But before it began, the television industry faced a painful crisis" or "If there was to be resistance, it would come from another sector of the program world. And it did"? There are some excellent anecdotes and enough pithy quotations to catch the flavor of fleeting moments in the cultural as well as the political history of the last fifty years. Exactly the right passages are quoted from men like Sarnoff or Minow and from once-influential books like James Rorty's *Our Master's Voice* of 1934 or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television* of 1950. Individual radio and television programs are summed up skillfully, and there are just enough statistics to illustrate both the main programming and the main market trends.

By contrast, Raymond Williams's spare, highly analytical and, in places, difficult book is lacking in detail except in one solitary chapter in the middle where the distribution of types of television programs on five channels—three in Britain, two in the United States—is studied reasonably systematically for one week in March 1973. Williams is the

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prophet of the long revolution, but he makes a good deal hang on that one particular week. In the historian's time-span it is a very fleeting week indeed, not a particularly exciting week and certainly not a representative one. Yet Williams derives from it a typology not only of programs but of the institutions providing them. "In all their ways, and in their essential combination," he concludes his chapter, "this is the flow of meanings and values of a specific culture." To which Barnouw, as a sensitive interpreter of historical change both in programming and in advertizing (Williams is not very revealing on the latter) would surely reply "very specific indeed."

Williams's technique here but not everywhere is that of literary exegesis, and he notes the emphasis in the American news reporting of the 1973 week on "today . . . today . . . now . . . fast . . . don't miss it . . . today . . . coming out . . . today . . . at this moment . . . today . . . now." He concludes, however, since he is above all else interested in structures, that "the sense of instantaneous, simultaneous happening" was "in general false." The conclusion itself needs further interpretation. Barnouw shows very convincingly that there have been very big changes indeed over fifty years of broadcasting history in the United States in the sense of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Indeed, he is particularly successful in identifying changes of mood when there have been no changes in structure, although not surprisingly he does not always succeed in explaining them.

Where Williams has the advantage is in his comparisons of American and British experience. His first two model-building chapters on "the technology and the society" and on "institutions of the technology" are lucid and compact as well as comparative; it was sensible to follow them up with the limited study of the distribution of British and American television programs in 1973 even if the results are of strictly limited relevance. After all, much that has been attributed by writers on communications to the influence of radio and television *per se* can be properly accounted for only in terms of broader economic, social and cultural forces operating within different societies. A common, still-developing electronic technology has been employed and assessed in very different ways in different places (the United States and Britain, for example) just as it has been employed and assessed at different points in its development in the same place (for example, Barnouw's United States over more than fifty years). In going back to the prehistory of television, Barnouw opens promisingly with an admirable survey in which he talks about other countries besides the United States, but thereafter he drops the experience of other countries except for a few occasional cross-references. He does not note, for

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example, that it was Britain, not the United States, which had the world's first regular television service in 1936. Nor does he ask key questions about the extent to which the United States was a special case before the 1960s. I doubt whether anyone in Britain would ever refer to television as "tube of plenty," although the phrase might well have figured in the propaganda campaigns preceding the introduction of commercial television in 1955 when there was talk of moving from austerity to affluence. If the phrase is going to be used—and it deserves to be used in relation to the United States—it must surely be seen within the context of specific American experience as described say in Potter's *People of Plenty* or Boorstin's *The Democratic Experience.*

Whenever Barnouw moves into the world outside the United States—and he has a great deal to say about American foreign policy—he does not seem completely at home. A jolting reference on the last page confirms a general impression: the designation of Christopher Nascimento as Prime Minister of Guyana might please Mr. Nascimento but would surprise Mr. Burnham. The mistake may not be important, but it is important in dealing with the thorny problems of the "cold war" to distinguish clearly in its early stages between the timetable of American opinion ("anti-American activities") and the timetable of actual events in Europe. There is, indeed, an interesting set of questions concerning the relationship of "actual events" to the "images" of them. In places Barnouw seems close to suggesting that foreign policy in an age of television has become entirely a matter of hero-and-villain mythology. I do not believe that it can be simplified in this way. A cross-reference to the place of radio and television in Britain during the Suez crisis of 1956 would have been illuminating, and it is significant also perhaps that the other great "problem" of 1956, Hungary, is only dealt with after the event in the context of Khrushchev dealing with awkward questions about it on his visit to the United States in 1959. Television, Barnouw says in a brief *envoi,* was "admired, trusted beyond other sources, accepted as *the* world—without a sense of what might be missing, because 'the' world was defined by the tube itself." He is sometimes perilously near to defining the issues of "'the' world" in communications terms alone.

Barnouw and Williams point in the same direction when they each turn from television within particular societies to television as a world force. They are both strongly influenced by Herbert Schiller's *Mass Communications and the American Empire.* There is need for far more study in this field—of popular reactions and interactions as well as of the statistics of program flows. Unfortunately, such studies tend

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to fall outside the research support of national foundations and even of most communications departments in universities, although they have been taken up by the International Broadcast Institute and there is already a substantial literature on the relation of communications policies to development policies as a whole.

In one final respect Williams looks ahead further than Barnouw. His last chapter, "alternative technology: alternative uses," deals not only with new technological options—some of which lead away from the "mass communications" phase of communication history—but with what he calls "a new universal accessibility." He suggests rightly, I believe, that the next fifty years will see as great changes in the approach to communications technology as the last fifty years. I do not think that Barnouw, who does not peer into the future, would disagree, but the division of his book into "toddler," "plastic years," "prime" and "elder" is too Spenglerian. For all the massive interests involved and the widely held belief in the United States that it is more difficult to change television than to change the Constitution, we are still in the "plastic years."

ASA BRIGGS

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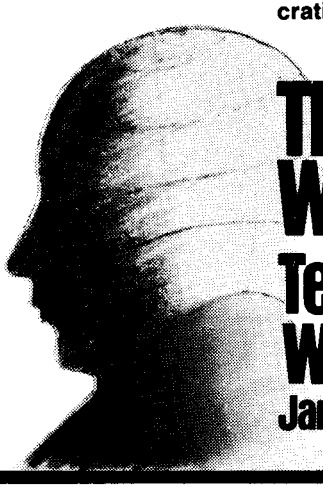

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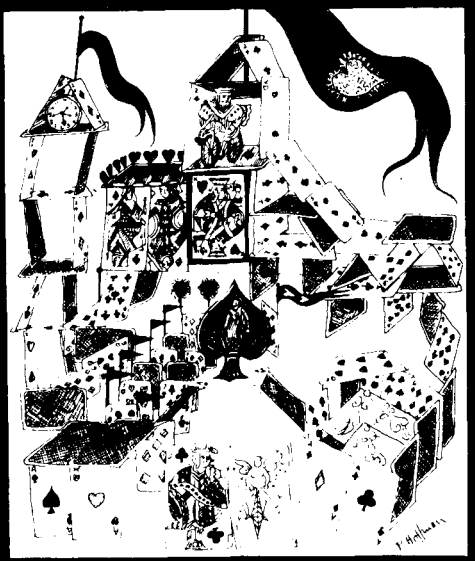

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